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DIALOGUES ON METAPHYSICS AND ON RELIGION

BY

NICOLAS MALEBRANCHE

TRANSLATED BY

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WITH A PREFACE

BY

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PREFACE

BESIDES containing the best exposition Malebranche has left us of his philosophical system, the *Entretiens sur la Métaphysique* form one of the most exquisitely written of philosophical books in any language. A translation cannot, of course, be expected to retain either the subtle elegance or all the delicate shades of meaning that delight a reader of the original. But Mr. Ginsberg has contrived, I think, to give the English reader a faithful rendering of the author's thought, and it is matter for congratulation that a work of so much significance in the history of speculation should at length have found a scholar willing to undertake the labour of translating it into our tongue.

Malebranche has been unduly neglected in most histories of philosophy; seldom has either the penetration or the originality of his metaphysical analysis received the attention it deserves. Too readily it has been concluded that the position he occupied was but a transition stage to the standpoint, more thoroughgoing, as it would be called, of Spinoza. And one need not be concerned to question that, in not a few respects, Malebranche does, as in his introductory estimate Mr. Ginsberg has made sufficiently apparent, come extremely near to the final form assumed by the Cartesian philosophy in its historical development. But an injustice is, I think, done to Malebranche when his work is dismissed, after the manner in which Kuno Fischer dismisses it, as but a half-way house to that identification of spirit and matter, of God and nature, in which Cartesianism culminated. To me it seems fairly evident that Malebranche contemplated in a more concrete, and therefore in a more effective, manner than Spinoza did certain fundamental problems—just *the* problems, in fact, with which the Cartesian philosophy, and in particular Spinoza's form of it, found itself incompetent to deal. One discerns, if I mistake not, in Malebranche's reflections a recognition of certain elements in the notions both of the finite mind and of the system of things in the midst of which the finite mind plays its part, that

transcend the prevailingly mechanical framework to which the Cartesian interpretation of the universe had to adapt itself. Consequently, I am inclined to believe that the somewhat hesitating, halting character of Malebranche's philosophising is due not more to its theological colouring than to the real superiority of his speculative insight.

When the first edition of the *Entretiens* was published in 1688, Spinoza's *Ethics* had already been before the public for a period of ten years.[1] And even the first of Malebranche's writings, the *Recherche de la Vérité*, which saw the light in 1674, was considerably later in date than those treatises of Spinoza that appeared in the latter's lifetime. In the correspondence, towards the end of his life, with De Mairan, Malebranche has left it on record that he had studied Spinoza's works, although not, he says, in their entirety, and it is hardly conceivable that the main lines of Spinoza's thought were unfamiliar to him. Indeed, apart from the rather feverish outburst in the ninth *Dialogue*, which may have been inspired by the representations of the "impious" doctrine furnished by such superficial critics as Aubert de Versé and Pierre Poiret, there are not wanting in the volume before us indications that the writer is struggling with problems which Spinoza's dialectic may well have forced upon him. No doubt it was upon the conception of creation as an arbitrary act of divine power and not a necessary consequence of the divine nature that he himself fastened as constituting what he held to be the immeasurable cleft between his philosophy and Spinoza's. While absolutely discarding Descartes' contention that even eternal truths are contingent on the will of God (a view, he declared, which would mean the very death of knowledge), he came, it must be confessed, dangerously near to a similar conception in regard to the whole range of existent fact. For, although he might have allowed that the essence of the finite is implied in the Infinite, what he actually insisted upon was that the real existence of the finite had no necessary relation to the being of the Infinite. The world was "called into" real existence; relatively to God, it is as nought, there is no reason for its existence; and he was obliged to have recourse to theological dogma in order to answer the puzzling question, why, then, it should exist at all.

But the stronger features of Malebranche's thinking come out

[1] Spinoza's *Opera Posthuma*, containing the *Ethica*, *De Intellectus Emendatione*, and the *Tractatus politicus*, appeared in 1677.

not in such conclusions as that just mentioned, but in the general considerations he brought to bear in reaching them. For example, with greater definiteness than Descartes had ever done, and with more persistency than in this connection was evinced by Spinoza, he laid stress upon the important, though difficult, metaphysical distinction between essence and existence. The infinite variety of possible geometrical forms in intelligible extension does not, he argued, necessarily imply the existence of any one geometrically related body. Even in sense-perception, the contents directly known by us, who "dwell but in the universal Reason," are essences or "ideas" in God. What alone induces us to assert the existence of entities corresponding to these "ideas" is the complex of confused imagery and corporeal feeling, produced by the stimulation which happens as a particular illustration or manifestation of the general laws established by the Divine will between soul and body. On the occasion of such bodily stimulation, there occur "modalities" or modifications of the mind—"sensations," as they came to be called—and through, or in conjunction with, these "modalities" we become aware of the primary and essential qualities, the "ideas" of things. The "ideas" are universal, each "modality" or operation of the mind is particular; the "ideas" are immutable, our modes of perceiving are all of them in time. In the awareness of a concrete thing, there are, then, involved (*a*) the "idea" or essence, more or less confusedly apprehended, of extendedness, and (*b*) the complex of sensations or feelings (*sentiments*), which we erroneously suppose to be the apprehension of external qualities. Thus Malebranche is driven to the conclusion that we do not know but only infer the concrete existence of external things; and, indeed, although he conceived that on theological grounds their existence was assured, he made no attempt to explain how "intelligible extension," containing as it does no particularising features, can be determined to manifest itself in the form of concrete entities. Yet, with the help of this opposition between essence and existence, Malebranche was in truth formulating the problem which is the fundamental problem of speculative philosophy. The discussion of it runs through the whole of the first period of modern philosophy, and it is virtually that which Kant had before his mind in the contradistinction, often so prominent in the critical inquiry, between thinking and knowing. One of the merits of Malebranche's handling of the subject is that the contrast which subsequent writers have fre-

quently ignored between the act of cognising and the content cognised was by him consistently kept in view. In perceiving the sun, for instance, though, he argued, it is true we do not see the actual material sun, that which we do see we recognise plainly enough to be something distinguishable from our act of seeing; and it is, therefore, flying in the face of all the evidence ("*contre notre lumière et contre notre conscience*") to assert that what the mind sees are its own states or modifications. No doubt, by the very fact of his locating the knowable essences of things in God, he was constrained to ascribe to these essences a quasi-existential mode of being, and thus exposed himself to Arnauld's acute and justifiable criticism. But it was, at any rate, a great gain to clear thinking to have the contrast itself forcibly and lucidly exhibited.[1] As another example of Malebranche's peculiar suggestiveness, I should instance his striking reflections upon the nature of self-consciousness. It is true, he maintained, that the "idea" or essence of each finite soul must be present in God, but we do not know our own minds by way of ideas. The self, that is to say, is not for us a definitely apprehended object; we are aware of the self only through the obscure channel of feeling. While of material things we *know* the essence but not the existence, of the soul we *feel* the existence but know not the essence. Impossible though it may be to reconcile this contention with his metaphysical doctrine, yet the contention in itself evinces a remarkable discernment of the real difficulties of introspective observation. A further feature of interest in Malebranche's treatment of the mental life, and a feature of it which has received comparatively little notice, is the emphasis that he laid upon the capacity of Attention. It is, he held, God who acts in us; but God acts by means of general laws, and the particular states of what may be called the practical consciousness which precede action on our part are, in accordance with his theory, the "occasions" on which God's general regulations come into force. These antecedents of particular action on our part are summed up by Malebranche under the term "attention." We have, he insisted, the power of dwelling upon our motives and impulses, and thus of comparing them with that illumination extended to us in reason or in the conceptions we have of the divine order. And through

[1] In phraseology almost identical with that used later by Locke, Malebranche tells us that by the word "idea" he understands nothing else than "that which is the immediate object of, or nearest to, the mind, when we perceive any object."

attention we acquire a control over our actions; all the typical forms of virtue depend for their realisation upon its exercise.

The form into which the work here translated is thrown, that of dialogue, is not an easy one to handle; and it can scarcely be claimed that Malebranche has succeeded in utilising it with a skill equal to Berkeley's. The *Entretiens* have not the artistic charm of *Alciphron*, although they may be compared, perhaps not unfavourably, with *Hylas and Philonous*. The characters in the *Dialogues* are three in number. Theodore personates Malebranche himself, and unfolds the main tenets of his philosophy to Aristes, in whose study the discussions are supposed to take place. Aristes is apparently a young man, who is conversant with the philosophical and theological opinions of the time. He is a willing pupil, eager to assimilate the principles propounded by his friend and instructor. At times he exhibits an almost boyish enthusiasm when the significance of a new thought has dawned upon him. Theotimus is introduced rather as an intermediary for the purpose of bringing the minds of the other two into a condition of mutual understanding than as making any serious contribution to the argument. He is evidently a priest who has had a wide experience of ordinary humanity, and his chief concern would seem to be to justify the teaching of the Church as presented to the multitude. On the whole, the dramatic setting of the work is not without its attractiveness; and we derive from it a fairly clear impression of the kind of atmosphere in the midst of which Malebranche's life was lived.

More than two hundred years have passed away since Malebranche's death. But of his works there is still no complete or reliable edition. The only edition that has claimed to be complete is that which was edited by Genoude and Lourdoueix and published in two volumes in 1837–38. In the first place, however, this edition is now out of print; and, in the second place, its claim to completeness is quite ill-founded. Not to mention the considerable amount of Malebranche's correspondence which has been printed since 1837, the edition in question does not contain a large number of his writings that are of importance for an adequate understanding of his thought. The *Entretiens*, in particular, have suffered badly in the hands of editors. The book was originally published by Reinier Leers at Rotterdam in 1688. André relates that Malebranche's secretary, Carré Louis, wishful to show his gratitude to his benefactor, endeavoured to obtain the consent

of King Louis XIV to the *Entretiens* being printed in France. The attempt turned out to be successful. A Paris edition appeared accordingly in 1699, and for that edition the work was augmented by a long Preface, in which the author quotes a number of passages from St. Augustine in support of his views, and also by three new *Entretiens sur la mort*, besides which the text was revised and several additions made to it. In the edition of Genoude and Lourdoueix the Preface is omitted; and in the various editions of the *Œuvres de Malebranche*, said to be "collationnées sur les meilleurs textes," by Jules Simon, both the Preface and the three new *Entretiens* are wanting. All this points to the crying need for a carefully revised and complete collection of Malebranche's works. Nor is it only philosophers who should be interested in such an undertaking. Malebranche's researches on the nature of light and colour have, as Pierre Duhem has shown, a distinct title to recognition in the history of physics, and his psychological theory of vision is, as Professor Norman Smith has made manifest, a great advance upon any earlier theory, in some respects even an advance upon Berkeley's. No one will accuse the French people of habitually forgetting their great men; and I trust the day is not far distant when, under the direction of competent scholars, Malebranche's writings will be presented to the world in a form that is worthy of them.

G. DAWES HICKS.

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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Part I

LIFE AND WORKS OF MALEBRANCHE

NICOLAS MALEBRANCHE was born at Paris on August 6, 1638. He was the son of Nicolas Malebranche, a royal secretary, and of Catherine de Lauzon, a gifted and attractive woman, to whose influence his most important biographer, Father André,[1] attributes not only Malebranche's piety, but the delicacy and charm of his writings. Malebranche was the youngest of a large family. He suffered all his life from malformation of the spine. On this account, he was educated at home till the age of sixteen, when he was sent to the Collège de la Marche. There he studied under Rouillard—an Aristotelian—and graduated Maître ès Arts in 1656. Father André tells us that Malebranche was profoundly dissatisfied with the philosophy that he had been taught, finding it "neither great nor true, full of vain subtleties, perpetual equivocation, lacking in taste and Christian spirit."

Intended from the first for the Church, Malebranche then went to the Sorbonne to study theology. But here again he found no satisfaction. Theology, according to Father André, was "only a confused mass of human opinions, frivolous discussions and hair-splitting subtleties, without any order or principle or rational interconnection." He was offered a canonry at the Notre Dame, but he refused to accept it; and at the age of twenty-two he entered the Oratory, where he studied ecclesiastical history, Hebrew and Biblical criticism.

[1] Cf. *La vie du R. P. Malebranche*, par le P. André (Paris, Ingold, 1886), and the *Éloges* (1731) of Fontenelle.

Malebranche was undoubtedly the child of the Oratory, as well as the disciple of Descartes. The Oratory was founded in 1611 by Cardinal Bérulle, who had a profound veneration for St. Augustine, and, through his influence, St. Augustine became the favoured theologian of the institution. Through St. Augustine interest was aroused in Platonism. Although Bérulle was a friend of Descartes, he did not introduce the Cartesian doctrine into the Oratory. This was done by his successor —Father de Condren—and very soon there were at the Oratory numerous adherents of Descartes. Their philosophy, however, always retained that tendency towards idealism and Platonism which is so characteristic of Malebranche. Especially was this so in the case of André Martin, better known as Ambrosius Victor, who was the first professor of the congregation to lead his pupils to the study of Descartes' philosophy. His work entitled *Philosophia Christiana*,[1] though Descartes is not mentioned in it, is really an attempt at a synthesis of the doctrines of Descartes and St. Augustine, and anticipates Malebranche's teaching in several respects.

We learn from Father André that at first Malebranche only knew the works of Descartes at second-hand, and even that he was "extremement prévenu contre ce philosophe." Be this as it may, the story goes that at the age of twenty-six he accidentally picked up at a bookstall Descartes' little treatise *De Homine*. He was struck by its method, and was especially attracted by the idea of a universal mechanics. "The joy of becoming acquainted with so large a number of discoveries caused him such palpitations of the heart that he was obliged to stop reading in order to recover his breath." He immediately set himself to study systematically mathematics and the books of Descartes. He always retained his admiration for Descartes, "who" he said, "in thirty years has discovered more truths than all the other philosophers put together."

After ten years' study, Malebranche published the first volume of the *Recherche de la Vérité*, in 1674, and the second volume appeared in 1675. The book was a great success, and was admired by many thinkers, including Arnauld, Fénélon and Bossuet. The congregation of the Oratory passed a special vote of commendation. In the lifetime of the author the work passed

[1] *Philosophia Christiana seu sanctus Augustinus de philosophia universim*, 1671.

through six editions, and was constantly revised and enlarged by supplementary explanations. It was translated into Latin by the Abbé L'Enfant, a member of the Academy of Berlin, under the title *De Inquirienda veritate, libri sex*, Geneva, 1685, and was eagerly studied in Italy, Spain, Germany, and Holland. In England two translations appeared, one by Brook Taylor,[1] a secretary of the Royal Society, and another by R. Sault.[2] The book, however, called forth lively opposition, in the first place from the ultra-Cartesians, and in the second place and especially from the theologians. A discussion with regard to his doctrine of Grace led to a meeting between Malebranche and his most formidable opponent, Antoine Arnauld. Malebranche promised to give an exposition of his views in writing, and this he did in the *Traité de la Nature et de la Grâce.* Arnauld replied in his book *Des vraies et des fausses Idées*, published in 1683, in which he attacked the whole basis of Malebranche's metaphysical system. The polemic, thus begun, lasted many years, constantly increasing in bitterness. Arnauld was anxious to humble Malebranche's "pride, boastfulness and impertinence." Malebranche restated his position in various forms and constantly complained of being misunderstood—a fact which made Boileau ask, "Eh, mon père, qui donc voulex-vous qui vous comprenne?" The treatise on Grace was put on the Index in 1690.

Apart from his polemical writings, Malebranche was the author of many important works. The *Entretiens sur la Métaphysique* was published in 1688, and may be regarded as the finished and definitive exposition of his philosophy. Without being deliberately polemical, it deals with all the points in his metaphysics that had been contested.

Malebranche devoted much of his attention to purely scientific work. Fontenelle[3] thought him a great geometrician and physicist, and he was elected a member of the "Académie Royale des Sciences" in 1699, in recognition of his *Traité des lois de la Communication du Mouvement*. He may be regarded

[1] *Father Malebranche's Treatise concerning the Search after Truth*, 2 vols. Oxford, 1694.

[2] *Malebranche's Search after Truth, or a Treatise of the Nature of the Humane Mind and of its Management for avoiding Error in the Sciences.* There is contained a life of Malebranche, together with some account of his controversies, written by Le Vasseur and translated by R. Sault. 2 vols. London, 1694–5.

[3] *Éloge de Malebranche.*

as one of the founders of the science of the infinitesimal calculus, and was the editor of the *Analyse des infiniment petits*, by de L'Hôpital. He modified considerably Descartes' doctrine of vortices. In his *Réflexions sur la Lumière, les Couleurs et la Génération du Feu* (Mémoires de l'Académie des Sciences, 1699), he tried to give a connected explanation of light and colour by ascribing them both to disturbances in a luminiferous fluid.

In this connection, reference may be made to his correspondence with Leibniz. Leibniz was in Paris in 1672, and appears to have had many conversations with Malebranche. In the treatise last mentioned, Malebranche acknowledges the justice of Leibniz's criticism of the Cartesian view of the constancy of the quantity of movement in the Universe. Leibniz wrote critical notes on this treatise, but he never published them. Malebranche's subsequent essay *Des infiniment petits* was also submitted to Leibniz, and was eventually published at the end of the *Recherche de la Vérité* in the edition of 1700.

In addition to his interest in physics and mathematics, Malebranche also devoted himself to anatomy, and above all to a study of the life of insects. For literary erudition, he seems to have had a great contempt. He was more moved, he tells us, by observation of the ways of an insect than by the whole history of Greece and Rome, and in a single principle of physics and of morals he found more truth than in all the books of history. Despite his contempt for literature, however, he was himself possessed of a graceful and attractive style, and though he constantly declaimed against imagination, he had, as Fontenelle said, "a very noble and living imagination himself, which worked for an 'ingrat' despite himself, and adorned his reason while constantly hiding itself from it." Leibniz, Diderot and many others agree in praising Malebranche's lucidity and elegance of phrasing, and Voltaire even recommended his writings as a model of philosophical exposition. "His diction," as Fontenelle says, "is pure and chaste, and has all the dignity which the subject requires and all the grace of which it admits."

The life of Malebranche was essentially that of a thinker. Already at college, his teachers described him as "pieux" and "méditatif"; and the whole of his subsequent career was devoted to quiet meditation and communion with God. In polemic he invariably engaged against his own will. His best work was done in the quiet of the country He had, as he put it, no need

of books. "There are few, or no books, which please me. When I was only twenty-five I understood what I read in books, but now I do not understand them for the most part at all."[1] He was, however, by no means a recluse. He was visited by numerous scholars from all parts of the world, and he carried on an extensive correspondence. He took great delight in talking to and playing with children, and would invent stories for them with wonderful facility. His personal charm, his nobility of mind, his love of truth, his winning modesty, simplicity and sincerity, made him universally beloved, and contributed, in no small measure, to the success and fame of his work.

He was taken ill while staying with a friend of his family at Villeneuve-Saint-Georges. He was brought back to the Oratory, and died after four months of great suffering. His disease, says Fontenelle, "adapted itself to his philosophy. The body, which he so much despised, was reduced to nothing; but like the mind, accustomed to supremacy, continued sane and sound. He remained throughout a calm spectator of his own long death, the last moment of which was such that it was believed he was merely resting." This is confirmed by the detailed description of his illness and death given by Father André,[2] who tells us that Malebranche died during the night of October 13, 1715, without fever or inflammation, out of sheer exhaustion. It may be added that this detailed account of Father André leaves no room for the story that Malebranche's death was hastened by a dispute with Berkeley. Indeed, there appears to be no evidence to show that the two philosophers ever met at all.

[1] Lettre à M. Barrant, *Correspondence inédite*, p. 4.

[2] Cf. *La vie du R. P. Malebranche*, by Father André, concluding chapters.

LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL WORKS OF MALEBRANCHE

PHILOSOPHICAL AND RELIGIOUS:

De la Recherche de la Vérité, 1674–5.

(Latin translation under title *De inquirenda Veritate*, by J. L'Enfant, at Geneva, 1685; English translation by R. Sault, 1692; and T. Taylor, under title, *Treatise concerning the Search after Truth*, 1694.)

Conversations chrétiennes, 1675.
(English translation, 1695.)
Petites Méditations chrétiennes, 1677.
Traité de la Nature et de la Grâce, 1680.
(English translation, 1695.)
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Lettres du P. Malebranche touchant celles de M. Arnauld, 1687.
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Part II

MALEBRANCHE'S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

A. The Vision of All Things in God.

The fundamental principles of Malebranche's theory of knowledge are undoubtedly Cartesian in character. He starts from the view that soul and body are substances whose positive attributes are mutually exclusive. The essence of body or corporeal reality is extension, and its properties can consist only in spatial relations, rest, movement and figure. The essence of mind, on the other hand, is thought or consciousness. It will be seen later that the modes of thought cannot be said to be as clearly involved in its essence as is the case with regard to the modes of extension. We know, however, by inner experience, that the mind can feel and will, judge, doubt, etc., and that these activities must be modes of the soul. Malebranche draws an elaborate parallel between mind and matter. The latter has two qualities,—namely, the capacity of receiving figure and the capacity of movement. So, too, the mind has firstly, the capacity of understanding, or of receiving ideas, and secondly, will, or the capacity of forming inclinations. The main object of this parallel is to show, in the first place, that the faculties which can be distinguished in mind, viz. understanding and will, are not to be conceived as separate entities, any more than the capacities possessed by matter, of receiving figures and of being moved, are distinct from matter; and in the second place, to bring out the consideration that neither mind nor matter has any power or activity of its own, but that just as God is the ultimate and real cause of all movements in the sphere of extension, so He is the universal cause of all ideas and inclinations.

It follows that the mind is essentially passive. Will is

secondary in character, is not included in the mind's essence, and our knowledge of it is so obscure that we are unable to deduce its properties. The real nature of mind consists in a passive capacity of receiving ideas. The different modes of knowledge are merely different ways in which the understanding manifests itself. Three such modes are distinguished by Malebranche. Firstly, by pure understanding we know spiritual things, universals, common notions, ideas of perfection, e.g. the infinite Perfection, extension and its properties. Secondly, by the imagination we know material things in their absence, by means of "traces" in the brain. Thirdly, by the senses we know sensible objects, through impressions produced upon our sense organs, by the objects themselves when present, and by the animal spirits when absent. Sense and imagination are really the understanding when it is aware of objects through means of the organs of the body.[1] Judgment means for Malebranche, as for Descartes, acquiescence on the part of the will in what is presented to it by the understanding. The latter does not judge but merely apperceives, and the will is free to give its consent or refuse it. The source of error, Malebranche argues, just as Descartes had done, lies in the will and not in the understanding.

In all this there is hardly any advance on the teaching of Descartes. Between the two thinkers there are, however, some far-reaching differences, and these are due in the first place to the fact that Malebranche worked out much more thoroughly than Descartes had done the logical consequences of the Cartesian dualism of mind and matter; and, in the second place, to the influence of St. Augustine and neo-Platonism, or perhaps more generally to his profoundly religious sense of the dependence of the finite mind upon the Infinite and his desire to find in the divine reason the ground of the human intellect.

Descartes does not appear to have fully faced the difficulties in his theory of perception which arise from the sharp separation of mind from matter. In the main his doctrine seems to have been that the soul, or mind, has within itself dispositions to ideas of extension, movement and figure; and that, on the occasion

[1] Cf. *Recherche*, Bk. I., Ch. I. Despite the statement made by Malebranche that sense and thought are merely different forms of the understanding, the real tendency of his philosophy is to institute a sharp distinction of kind between them.

of certain movements or impressions, produced upon the sense organs and carried to the brain, these ideas arise in the mind, or are occasioned in it. The impressions or, as they were called by the latter Cartesians, corporeal species (cf. de la Forge) are not themselves known to the mind, but act merely as occasions or conditions of the knowledge of objects on the part of the mind. What happens, then, in perception is that bodies communicate movements to the sense organs and to the brain, i.e. to the pineal gland, where the soul is present, and thus excite in it the sensations of colour, etc., at the same time calling up the ideas of extension and movement, which ideas then take the particular determination, corresponding to and resembling the bodies which call them forth. Perception of an object, therefore, presupposes, firstly, a power in bodies to act on the mind and cause it to produce ideas, or to call forth ideas which are potentially in it, and, secondly, a faculty in the mind to give rise to ideas. But even in the writings of Descartes there are many passages in which the action of bodies is confined to providing *occasion* for the mind to call up the ideas innate in it. Be this as it may, Malebranche explicitly denies both these presuppositions. The ascription of forces to nature or of faculties to mind is due, he argues, to our blind reliance on the evidence of the senses. Not only is mind unable to act on matter, or matter on mind, but all activity, either within the sphere of extension, or within the sphere of thought, is divine activity. Finite causes are at the most occasional causes The real cause of the movement which takes place, on the occasion of an impact, is God. So, too, the real cause of our ideas cannot lie in ourselves. Man cannot be a light unto himself, he insists, in the language of St. Augustine. The account of perception given by Descartes is therefore liable to the two-fold objection, (*a*) that it involves interaction between the two entirely disparate substances of mind and matter, and (*b*) that it ascribes to the finite mind a power which is inconsistent with the doctrine of "occasional causes" when fully developed.

In various places, Malebranche expresses dissatisfaction with Descartes' views as to the nature of ideas. The definitions of the term "idea" given by Malebranche and Descartes resemble one another very closely. Thus Malebranche says, an "idea" is "ce qui est l'objet immediat ou le plus proche de l'esprit quand il aperçoit quelque objet." For Descartes an "idea" is "ipsa

res cogitata quatenus est objectivo in intellectu." Descartes often uses the term "idea" to represent sensory qualities. Thus, he speaks of the "sensation" or "idea" (*sensus vel idea*) of colour and heat. Malebranche's definition would seem to comprise under "idea" all that we are aware of when we know an object, and in the case of an object of the senses this should include sense-qualities. Here, however, a distinction of great importance for his general theory must be noted. The sense-qualities are on Cartesian principles modifications of the soul, they belong, that is, not to the object apprehended, but to the subject. As such, they are not known by way of idea, but by inner feeling (*sentiment intérieur*). The term "idea" in Malebranche's actual usage is restricted to the apprehended essence of a thing, to what in later phraseology might be described as the objective element in knowledge, which, in the case of bodies, would, of course, be extension. Now, with regard to essences, Descartes shows a good deal of hesitation. In some places (e.g. *Méditations*, V.) he speaks of them as eternal and immutable, independent of finite thought. In other places (e.g. *Principles*, Pt. I. LIX.) he regards them as abstractions or generalisations made by the individual, on the basis of his experience of individual objects. Further, essences, and it may be added laws, were regarded by Descartes as dependent upon the arbitrary will of God. Malebranche argues that, since they represent the essences of things, ideas are as such immutable, infinite, necessary, universal, and are, therefore, independent of any mind, finite or infinite. To this contention we will return later. Meanwhile, attention must be drawn to a further distinction which was familiar to some of the Cartesians, the distinction, namely, between the act of apprehending and the object or content apprehended. The former was designated sometimes by the term "perception," the latter by the term "idea." There can be no doubt that underlying Malebranche's theory of knowledge there was the implicit assumption that to know a thing, the mind must, in some sense, *be* that thing, that, in other words, knowledge involved a kind of mystic union or identification of that which knows with that which is known. On such an assumption, only an omnipresent being, a being "which was at the same time one and all things," could know everything in and through himself. With regard to finite minds, on the other hand, the question arose, how acts which are necessarily temporal, changeable, finite,

could know ideas which are, as we have seen, eternal, immutable, infinite. In his various writings, Malebranche is constantly reverting to this question. How can a finite being have modifications which represent the infinite? How can a particular being become so modified as to represent, for example, a figure in general, or the immensity of extension, or the infinite perfection? The finite being cannot be its own light. These words of St. Augustine are repeatedly reiterated by Malebranche in his discussions with Arnauld. It is clear that, along such a line of thought, the act or process of thinking is entirely separate from the content apprehended; and it is likewise clear that it becomes difficult to say in what precisely that act consists. In the long run, it resolves itself into the mere presence of ideas to or the passive reception of them by, or a mystic union of them with, the finite soul. Malebranche adopts the solution of the problem that is furnished by St. Augustine. St. Augustine, too, was confronted with the necessity of accounting for the eternal validity and timeless character that attached to the *rationes æternæ*, and he, too, distinguished between the act or process of knowing and the content or idea known. The former is an act or process of the individual who is aware, the latter is independent, necessary and unchangeable, and, as such, could not be due to the individual mind. The individual mind might, indeed, discover it, but could not be its source; man could not be a light unto himself. The solution of the difficulty St. Augustine found in the hypostatisation of truth and the ascription to truth of a reality over against the individual mind. Truth, the intelligible light, is God Himself. To explain the possibility of knowledge on the part of the finite mind, St. Augustine made use of the neo-Platonic conception of illumination, or radiation. The finite soul is illumined by the eternal light. We see the eternal truths in God, in whom and through whom all things have being and light, in the Eternal Wisdom, the Divine Logos. Following Plotinus and the neo-Platonists, St. Augustine conceived of eternal truths as thoughts of the divine mind. The ideas were the archetypes and models of all that is created, the eternal immutable numbers, in accordance with which the world of change and succession was moulded, framed and regulated. True reality lay in them alone. All else exists or has being only so far as it participates in, or is an imitation of, the true reality of the *mundus intelligibilis*. Herein he is

followed very closely by Malebranche. The universal necessity and the immutability of truths can only be accounted for, according to Malebranche, by the fact that we all share or participate in a common reason, that we see all things in God, that man is an animal *rationis particeps* in the sense that he is united with the universal Reason, which is co-eternal and consubstantial with God, a reason which contains the essences of all things and in which all things abide eternally.[1]

Along this line of reflection, Malebranche is driven to deepen the distinction between essence and existence, and to develop a theory of truth which goes beyond that of Descartes. While Descartes thought that truths were dependent upon the arbitrary will of God as "souverain législateur," Malebranche urges that such a view would make any real science impossible. The divine will itself is dependent upon the immutable order or relations which subsist between the ideas and which constitutes truth. God contains within Himself the "intelligible perfections" of all things, possible or actual, and through them He knows their essences, while through His volitions He is aware of their existence. Truths are relations of equality or inequality between ideas. Thus, since it is true that $2 + 2 = 4$, and false that $2 + 2 = 5$, there is a relation of eqality between $2 + 2$ and 4, and a relation of inequality between $2 + 2$ and 5. The relations are as immutable as the ideas themselves, and it is impossible that they should ever become false.

Furthermore, Malebranche supplements this theory of truth with a theory of order or divine law which is the basis of morality. The relations which subsist between ideas are of two kinds. On the one hand, there are relations of equality or inequality in magnitude (*grandeur*), and on the other hand there are relations of perfection. The perfections which are in God represent entities possible or actual, and are not all of equal value. Within the sphere of the ideas representing bodies and within the sphere of ideas representing minds there are infinite differences of degree of nobility. If it be asked how the infinite can admit of degree, Malebranche replies that there are similar relations between infinite perfections as between finite things, and that all infinites are not necessarily equal. Just as we can discover the relations which subsist between incommensurable numbers, though we are unable to

[1] *Éclaircissements*, X, *Méditations chrétiennes*, I.

determine the relations in which they stand to unity, so we can determine to some extent the relations between the various infinite perfections. If these ideas are not of equal perfection, there must be an immutable and necessary order expressing relations of perfection. The order, however, is so far merely a speculative truth. But God loves His own substance necessarily. It is this love, indeed, which constitutes the Divine will, and the Divine will is determined in accordance with the immutable order of God's perfections. It follows that this immutable order has the force of a law or moral imperative on God, and *a fortiori* on us.[1]

With the conception of an immutable order Malebranche connects his explanation of beauty. All beauty, at least the beauty which is the object of the intellect (*esprit*), is plainly an imitation of the immutable order. He instances painting and music. Sensuous beauty, however, is deprecated: "Il n'y a rien qui affaiblisse tant l'esprit et qui corrompe tant l'esprit."[2]

The immutable order of ideas thus constitutes the divine reason, its wisdom and its justice. Not only so. Because our souls are intimately united with God, or, as Malebranche sometimes puts it, because God is "the place of spirits, just as space is the place of bodies," the essences in the divine intellect are also the immediate objects of the human mind. In truth, finite minds were called into being only to know and love God, and they can know things only in and through God. The idea of the Infinite underlies all our knowledge and is presupposed in it. Particular ideas are only participations in the general idea of the Infinite, just as created things are but imperfect participations in the Divine Being. All our knowledge is a determination of the knowledge we have of God, just as our volitions are determinations of the general tendency towards the Good or the love which God bears towards Himself out of the necessity of His own being. The ultimate basis of all knowledge is not the conception of a collective sum of being, arrived at by an amalgamation of the ideas of particular beings, but rather the conception of the Infinite, i.e. reality as a whole, or the essence of reality, in which finite things only imperfectly participate. Descartes, too, had urged that the idea of the Infinite is prior

[1] *Traité de l'amour de Dieu; Entretiens*, VIII; *Éclaircissements*, X; *Méditations chrétiennes*, IV; *Traité de la morale.*

[2] *Méditations chrétiennes*, IV

to the idea of the finite and is presupposed in it. Malebranche strenuously maintains that at the basis of all finite thought there lies the idea of the Infinite, that it is only in and through God that we know anything at all. The acts of perception or of knowing are individual, peculiar to individuals, though they may resemble one another; but the truths which we know are common to all, immutable, necessary and eternal, and, therefore, can have their being only in the eternal and immutable essence of the divinity.

Along the line of thought just sketched, Malebranche follows pretty closely the doctrine of St. Augustine. But he differs from that doctrine with regard to our knowledge of sensible objects. He points out that, although St. Augustine had given a better explanation of the relation between soul and body than any of his predecessors, he had, nevertheless, erred in attributing sensible qualities to bodies, and, he adds, that the difference between body and soul was not clearly known until quite recently (*depuis quelques années*). Elsewhere he tells us that he had learnt the doctrine of ideas from St. Augustine. Apparently his aim was to effect a synthesis between the latter doctrine and the teaching of Descartes with respect to the relation between mind and body and the distinction between primary and secondary qualities. According to St. Augustine, individual objects were known by means of the senses; and, although the knowledge thus obtained, concerned as it was with the world of change and generation, could not be called knowledge proper, but was merely opinion, no doubt was thrown on the existence of the sensible world. Indeed, in a sense, even the eternal truths could be legitimately applied to the particulars of sense. The laws of number, for example, were the norms which we can use in dealing with tones, figures and movements. Similarly we can judge of material things in accordance with the laws of space and geometrical figures. This position Malebranche could not accept; he had inherited a distrust of the senses from Descartes, and he accepted the distinction drawn by Descartes between primary and secondary qualities. With regard to the latter, the senses, Malebranche argued, plainly deceive us. Colours, for example, are not really spread out over the surface of bodies, as the senses lead us to believe, but are sensations or modifications of the soul. The senses have, indeed, the valuable function of warning us of the existence of bodies,

And the sensations which the soul experiences, on the occasion of their presence, serve as a "revelation" of great importance for the preservation of life, but they are false witnesses with reference to the real nature of bodies; in order to become aware of that real nature, we require an idea which is representative, in other words, we can only know things by seeing their archetype in the mind of God. Malebranche was, therefore, led to conclude, as against St. Augustine, that we see all things, including bodies, in God, and not merely general truths.

B. Intelligible Extension.

In the earlier editions of the *Recherche* no use is made of this conception; and, as Arnauld pointed out, Malebranche often speaks as though in the mind of God there were the ideas of all things.[1] Yet, since ideas are equivalent to the essences of things and the essence of *all* bodies is extension, the transition from ideas of sensible objects to one idea embracing them all was easily made.[2] We shall see later how Malebranche endeavours to distinguish intelligible extension from the divine immensity on the one hand, and from what he calls local or material extension on the other. Meanwhile, we have to consider the way in which he conceives we arrive at a knowledge of particular objects by means of this idea.[3] Intelligible extension is the essence or idea or archetype of matter. It is that in God which is the source of all that is real in bodies, the substance of God, in so far as such substance is representative of bodies. It is that which, in the phraseology of a later time, might be called the objective element in our apprehension of the material world. Sensible qualities, on the other hand, are subjective, particular, and do not belong to the essence of matter. Neither can they be its modifications, for its modifications can only consist of spatial relations, or relations of distance, as Malebranche calls them. By diverse applications of this idea, we are able to obtain, on the one hand, a knowledge of intelligible figures, i.e. of the objects of the mathematical sciences, and on

[1] "*Toutes les créatures même les plus matérielles et les plus terrestres sont en Dieu, quoi-que d'une manière plus spirituelle.*"

[2] See the *Éclaircissements sur le troisieme livre de la Recherche*, Ch. X.

[3] *Écl., Réponse à Regis*, Ch. II; *Entretiens; Réponse à Arnauld.*

the other hand, a knowledge of sensible figures, i.e. of bodies. In the former case, we have a clear idea, a pure perception of intelligible extension, limited or bounded in certain definite ways. In the latter case, we have an idea of extension, similarly limited, but, in addition, there arise in the soul, owing to the laws of the conjunction of soul and body, certain modifications, i.e. feelings or sensations of colour and light. In other words, it is the sensible qualities, especially colour, which render it possible for intelligible extension to become sensible, and which enable us to get a knowledge of different objects out of the idea of extension which is the same throughout. Knowledge of objects, then, involves (*a*) an idea of extension, (*b*) a mass of sensations, which we mistakenly ascribe to the extension, but which are, in truth, modifications of the soul.

Our awareness of movement is explained after a similar fashion. Since the volitions of God do not change, intelligible extension is not movable even intelligibly,—that is to say, the parts of intelligible extension always retain the same relation of distance to one another. If, however, an intelligible figure, rendered sensible by means of colour, is taken successively from different parts of intelligible extension, or, in other words, if we attach the same sensation of colour successively to different parts, we shall see the figure successively in different places, it will appear to us to be moving, although intelligible extension remains unmoved; and we are thus enabled to become aware of movement in actually existing material extension, though in intelligible extension, or in the essence of extension, as it is in the mind of God, there is no movement.

C. The Knowledge of Our Own Minds.

With respect to the knowledge we have of ourselves, Malebranche differs profoundly from Descartes and the stricter Cartesians. He agrees with them as regards the certainty of the existence of soul and of its distinction from the body. But while they thought the soul was better known than extension, Malebranche is of opinion that of the nature of the soul we are utterly ignorant. To know a thing is to have a clear idea of it, to know the modifications of which it is capable, the relations in which it stands to other things. Now, we have no idea of

the soul, we do not, except by experience, know of what modifications it is capable. For example, if we had never felt pleasure or pain, we should not know whether the soul was or was not capable of them. We do not know the relations of minds to one another, nor the relations between the various modifications of the soul, e.g. pleasure and pain, heat and colour, nor even the relation of similar colours to one another. Nor do we know the real relation of the soul to the body, nor the nature of their union; and we could not tell whether the soul in itself, and apart from the body, was or was not capable of memory. Since there is in the mind of God an idea of all things, there must be an archetype and model of all created souls; but this idea or archetype God does not disclose to us. We know by inner feeling (*conscience ou sentiment intérieur*) *that* we are; we do not know *what* we are.

Some recent writers, notably Cassirer [1] and Novaro,[2] discern in this view of Malebranche a determination to restrict the science of mind to the phenomenal. As a result of a critical analysis of the notion of substance, Malebranche, they think, is urging scientific investigators to give up the search for a "subject" lying beyond the world of phenomena, and to confine themselves to the empirical subject. I do not conceive that this view can be substantiated. No doubt, seeing that there is no idea of the soul, there can be no *a priori* or deductive science of psychology. But it is entirely misleading to represent Malebranche as an advocate of empirical methods in psychology. On the contrary, he pursues the ontological method. It is in God that he seeks to determine the nature of the human mind. His doctrine of parallelism, for example, is not a scientific hypothesis resulting from observed facts, but is based upon his metaphysical conception of the impotence of finite creatures and the omnipotence of God. So, too, he determines the nature of human inclinations not by observation but in accordance with a standard laid down by him as to what they ought to be consistently with the real end of man, namely, the glory of God.[3] Moreover, it is difficult to see wherein Malebranche has criticised the notion of substance. He accepts it from Descartes and defines it in the same way as Descartes had defined it. He

[1] *Erkenntnissproblem*, I., p. 558.
[2] *Die Philosophie des Nicolas Malebranche.*
[3] Cf. *Recherche*, Bk. IV.

assumes throughout that mind and body are substances; and, in his discussion of extension and matter, his point lies not in rejecting the notion of substance, but rather in proving that the substance of matter can be nothing but extension. Likewise, so far as the soul is concerned, he does not deny its substantiality; he merely protests that we have no clear idea of it. The real motive of Malebranche's teaching in this connection was his fear of a pantheistic notion of the soul to which he felt himself drifting against his will. If we had an idea of ourselves, i.e. if we knew ourselves as in the mind of God, the conclusion that our individual existence is an illusion, that finite souls are but particular modifications of the divine or universal mind, could hardly have been resisted.

D. Our Knowledge of Other Minds.

Malebranche's explanation of the way in which we come to know other minds than our own is still more precarious. It is clear that we cannot know them in themselves, or directly, for God alone can "penetrate our minds and reveal Himself to us." Neither can we know other minds through means of ideas; for, as we have seen, although God contains within Himself the archetypes of all minds, He does not disclose those archetypes to us. The third method of knowledge called by Malebranche "conscience" is unavailing here, since we can have no inner feeling of what is outside us. Considerations of this sort compel Malebranche to say that we know other minds only by conjecture. I guess or infer that there are other minds similar to my own, because I sometimes have thoughts, not occasioned by my will, and accompanied by certain sensations, which lead me to conclude that they are due to beings resembling myself. It is true these sensations of sound and colour are entirely subjective, i.e. modifications of my mind, and do not warrant a belief even in the existence of bodies, and if they did, there would still be the possibility that God was making those bodies an occasion or instrument for the communication of ideas to my mind. Nevertheless, the ideas or thoughts which come to me in that way are such "as to lead me naturally to believe that there exists a mind similar to my own, which has conceived them and which has desired to communicate them to

me."[1] It would appear, then, that the only ground for our belief in the existence of other minds is such "natural inclination." Yet, as we shall see, Malebranche, differing in this respect from Descartes, refused to rely on such a natural inclination when dealing with the existence of bodies, and was compelled in the end to have recourse to faith for a proof of their existence. The existence of other minds must, therefore, be at least as problematic as that of bodies.

E. Our Knowledge of God.

Respecting our knowledge of God, it is somewhat difficult to get a clear account. In a sense, as we have seen, all our knowledge is knowledge of God, that is to say, all our knowledge is a particular determination of our knowledge of the Infinite, just as all our love is a particular determination of the general tendency towards the Good, or of the infinite love wherewith God loves Himself. On the other hand, our knowledge of ideas, immutable and eternal though they be, is not equivalent to a knowledge of the divine substance in itself. For, although the ideas constitute the divine reason, yet they do so merely in so far as it is representative of created things, merely in so far as it is capable of being participated in, or imitated, by them. In knowing, the intelligible perfections are communicated to us, but though we see them, we do not see God as He is in His absolute and individual reality. We see Him merely in so far as His perfections are representative of finite things and under the conditions attendant on finitude.

It follows from the nature of the Infinite Being that there can be no idea representative of Him. God, or the Infinite, can have no archetype; He is Himself His own archetype. All things are seen in and through the Infinite, but the Infinite can be seen only in itself. Essence and existence cannot here be separated. The idea of being has no meaning without being; and, accordingly, the thought of the Infinite involves God's existence, for since nothing finite can represent the Infinite, we can only think of Him in Himself. It follows from what has been said that when it is asserted that we see God in Himself, the meaning is that we do so without the intervention of a

[1] *Méditations Métaphysiques*, p. 68.

representative idea, but not that we really attain to His simplicity or discover His perfections as they are in themselves.

F. Some Critical Considerations.

This account of the nature of knowledge may be scrutinised from two points of view. In the first place, we may ask whether, granting its pre-suppositions and within its own limits, the theory offers a consistent account of the way in which we arrive at our knowledge of the world of experience. In the second place, we may inquire into the validity of the assumptions or presuppositions upon which it is based.

(*a*) The first question that arises is as to what precisely is meant by the potential inclusion of all figures in intelligible extension. It is clear that figures are not actually contained in extension, as extension is contained in the mind of God, for, according to Malebranche, figures are only conceivable by means of movement, and God sees no movement in His essence. If, then, God is to see a certain figure of intelligible extension in order to apply it to our minds, He must limit intelligible extension, which in itself is figureless, in a certain way, but to do this He must have an idea of the figure which He wills to make. The general idea of intelligible extension helps us, therefore, here but little.

The difficulties are enhanced in the case of our knowledge of particular objects. Such knowledge involves, as we have seen, (1) an idea of extension, limited in a definite way, and (2) a complex of sensations caused in us by God. Now, in the first place it may be asked, how God, who has no sensations in Himself, is able to call up sensations in my mind at all. Malebranche tells us that although God does not feel sensations yet He knows them, because He contains within Himself the archetypes of all minds, and can, therefore, see the modifications of which they are capable. But, since knowledge always implies immediate presence, and God can only know that which is "within Himself," it is hard to discern how from the idea of the soul in which there is no pain or any other sensations, God can deduce the modifications of which such soul is capable. Malebranche is himself aware of this difficulty, and in the end he is compelled to take refuge in an asylum of ignorance. "My consciousness," he says, "teaches me as well as other

men that I suffer pain, and my reason tells me that God and God alone can cause me to suffer. But since neither I nor anyone else has a clear idea of the soul or of the archetype in accordance with which God created it, I cannot throw any light on this difficulty." [1]

In the second place, the sensations, being subjective, particular, not involved in the essence of the thing of which we are aware, ought *prima facie* to occur quite irregularly and contingently. How is it, then, that complexes of sensations always come together in my mind, in a fairly uniform manner, and not only in my mind, but also in other minds than mine? The answer is that God acts in accordance with certain necessary and universal laws,—in this connection in accordance with the laws of the communication of movement and of the conjunction of soul and body. Now, as we have seen, intelligible extension is similar throughout. What, then, determines God to call up in our minds, now one complex of sensations, and now another, must be the *occasions*, as Malebranche calls them, which regulate the exercise of the invariable laws, such occasions being in this case nothing but the *presence of objects*.

Accordingly, there must be objects differing in character that determine God to act in different ways on different occasions in accordance with universal laws. But if this be so, the existence of objects becomes a metaphysical necessity, since without them no explanation could be given of the order and regularity of experience—a necessity which, as is well known, Malebranche refused to recognise. Further, the whole difficulty involved in our knowledge of the particular is not overcome, but only removed a stage further back. For if the order of our sensations be determined by objects as occasional causes, then God must know these objects, and must know them, not merely in their general character as extended, but as individual and particular. The knowledge of the particular is, therefore, still unexplained, at least so far as God is concerned, or at any rate is presupposed in the explanation of it that Malebranche offers. Arnauld's story of the sculptor applies here. When the sculptor was requested by a friend for a picture or likeness of St. Augustine, he brought him a slab of marble and told him that he needed only to remove the superfluous matter to discover the likeness he wanted, forgetting that, in order to do this, it was necessary

[1] *Réflexions sur la Prémotion physique*, IX.

to know first of all what St. Augustine looked like. Arnauld pressed this difficulty with reference to the individual knower. In what way, he asked, can we know how to limit intelligible extension and clothe it with certain sensations so as to represent a certain object, unless we already have an idea of the object we want to know? Malebranche might conceivably have replied that it is not the individual who limits extension, and at the same time calls up sensations, but God or the Infinite who possesses ideas of all things, and also knows the modifications of which our soul is capable. But such a reply would have been unavailing against the difficulty urged above, for we have seen that in order to account for the regularity of our sensations, it is necessary that the universal laws in accordance with which God acts should be determined by occasional causes, that is to say, by the presence of objects of determinate character, which God must know in order to be able to act upon our minds in regular and orderly manner. Yet God can only know that which is within Himself, only His own ideas; and no ingenuity will render explicable, how out of these ideas—universal in character as they are—either the Infinite mind or our minds can arrive at a knowledge of the particular objects of our experience.

Clearly, then, Malebranche did not succeed in effecting the synthesis between the Augustinian or neo-Platonic doctrine of Ideas and the teaching of Descartes, which he desired in order to reach a comprehensive theory of a vision of *all* things in God. Our knowledge of the particular is so far from being explained that the question is forced repeatedly upon Malebranche whether the material world exists at all. God, His ideas, and the relations between them constitute the intelligible world; the soul and its modifications account for the sensible world. What need, therefore, is there for an external world to which no intelligible meaning can be assigned, a material extension which it is difficult to define, and which can hardly be distinguished from the intelligible extension, which alone is real? In dealing with this question, Malebranche reasserts the arguments used by Descartes in the same connection, e.g. the delusive character of the senses, etc. Malebranche, however, is not, and cannot be, satisfied with Descartes' solution. According to the latter,[1] my passive faculty of perception, i.e. of receiving ideas of sensible things, involved the existence of a corresponding

[1] *Méditations*, VI.

active faculty of forming or producing these ideas, and such active faculty could not exist in me, seeing that ideas are produced in my mind without my contributing to their production, and often against my will. It must, therefore, Descartes argued, exist in a substance other than myself, which must be either a corporeal entity or God. But seeing that we have a strong persuasion that ideas arise from corporeal objects, and seeing that God has not given us any faculty whereby we can discover that such is not the case, it is clear that God would be a deceiver, if our natural inclinations did not lead us to the truth. This argument cannot, however, satisfy Malebranche, for, in the first place, he will not allow that corporeal things have an active power of exciting ideas in our minds, seeing that the only active power lies in God; and, in the second place, the argument based on the fact that God is no deceiver does not amount to a clear proof. We must not believe anything beyond what we are compelled to believe. Thus, when we see corporeal things we must conclude only that we see them, and that these visible or intelligible things really exist. Yet what reason have we for saying positively that there exists outside of us a material world resembling the intelligible world which we see? It is true that we see corporeal things as external to us. Still, do we not see the light outside us, and in the sun, and is it not, nevertheless, clear that light is a modification of our soul and does not exist in the external object at all? Our natural inclination is not evidence. Indeed, as Malebranche frequently points out, no clear and incontrovertible proof can be given of the existence of corporeal things. On the contrary, a demonstration may be given of the impossibility of such a proof, apart from what is offered us by faith. For a clear proof consists in the establishment of a necessary connection between the ideas which are being compared; and there is no such necessary connection between the infinitely perfect being and any created entity. God is abundantly sufficient unto Himself. "Matter, therefore, is not a necessary emanation from the Divinity."

If corporeal things do exist, they must depend upon the volition of God; but whereas all God's volitions are dependent upon the immutable order of His perfections, and are, so to speak, the expressions of the relations subsisting necessarily between the divine ideas, the particular volition to create the world is not a necessary consequence of the divine nature, for

the notion of the infinitely perfect being involves, according to Malebranche, no necessary relation to a created world, and indeed excludes the possibility of such a relation. The existence of corporeal things is, therefore, arbitrary, and cannot be rigorously deduced from the nature of God. To save the existence of the material world Malebranche is compelled to have recourse to faith. There is no other way than revelation to assure us that God has willed to create corporeal things. "To be fully convinced of the existence of corporeal things it is necessary not only to prove that there is a God, and that He is no deceiver, but also that He has assured us that He really did create them, and of this I find no proof in the writing of Descartes."[1] Proof of this latter point can be found only in the Bible and the doctrines of the Church.[2]

It would, I think, be a mistake to suppose that Malebranche's belief in the existence of matter was philosophically insincere, or that when he speaks of creation he does so only to avoid conflict with the religious opinions of the time. Such was apparently the opinion of Novaro; but, as Pillon[3] points out, Malebranche did not divorce reason from faith, but considered them to be closely connected, and spoke quite seriously of a union of two substances in man. And, as we shall see later, it was, in Malebranche's opinion, the doctrine of creation which saved him from the pantheism of Spinoza.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the existence of a material world becomes exceedingly problematic, and Berkeley,[4] referring to the followers of Malebranche, was justified in asserting "that they should suppose an innumerable multitude of created beings which they acknowledge are not capable of producing any effect in nature, and which, therefore, are made to no manner of purpose, since God might have done everything as well without them; this, though we should allow it possible, must yet be a very unaccountable and extravagant supposition." Similar objections were urged by Locke, Bayle, Arnauld, and De Mairan, all of whom pointed out that the material world could have no real place in Malebranche's system, and, in addition, it ought to be noted that, though Malebranche does retain that world, he yet deprives it of all real power and of any sort of independent being.

[1] *Écl.*, VI.
[2] *Entretiens*, VI. 8.
[3] *L'Année philosophique*, 1893.
[4] *Principles*, § LIII.

(*b*) So far I have dealt with Malebranche's theory of knowledge from the point of view of his own system. It is necessary now to examine its presuppositions and assumptions. In this connection, it will be well to consider the main arguments urged against Malebranche's doctrine by Arnauld, in his book *Des vraies et des fausses idées*, and other writings. Arnauld detects most of the vulnerable points of the doctrine of representative perception, and furnishes a foundation for a thoroughgoing realistic theory of knowledge.[1]

The main burden of Arnauld's criticism consists in the contention that the doctrine of representative ideas is based upon an assumption which is never submitted to examination, the assumption, namely, that direct knowledge of real things is impossible, and that therefore, a *tertium quid*, a representative idea, is needed to mediate between the mind and the objects known. Having *assumed* the need of "êtres représentatifs," Malebranche, he points out, proceeds to inquire where they are to be placed, and by a method of exclusion or elimination concludes that they can be possessed by God alone. But the assumed impossibility of direct perception, Arnauld maintains, is really based upon a number of naïve prejudices, none of which can stand the light of critical scrutiny.

In the first place, it is taken for granted that the mind can only know ideas, can only know that which is like itself spiritual in character. This belief rests, however, on the unproved assumption that like can only know like. But what reason is there for thus restricting the realm of the knowable? *Prima facie* only non-being is incapable of being known, and to be knowable is a property inseparable from all that has being. It is, therefore, a mere prejudice to insist that the soul can only know ideas.

In the second place, it is supposed that corporeal things cannot be known directly, because what is known must act upon the mind, and corporeal things are incapable of such action. But this again is based upon the implicit assumption that nothing can be known by the mind except that which can act upon it. How do we know that this is the case? To be known does not on the face of it involve an active operation at all.

In the third place, it is assumed that the mind is passive,

[1] Cf. *Œuvres philosophiques de Antoine Arnauld*, 1843, ed. Jules Simon. This volume contains also Malebranche's *Réponses*.

and can, therefore, have no knowledge on its own account. Such a contention is, however, inconsistent with Malebranche's own teaching. For will and understanding are not on his own showing separate entities, but manifestations or expressions of the soul; and, accordingly, the admission that the mind is active in volition involves the admission that the mind as such is active. Moreover, when it is said that the mind is active, the meaning is that it has the capacity of knowing or thinking, and it is really quite as unreasonable to ask how the mind can think as it is to ask why extension is divisible, since the capacity of thinking and divisibility constitute the formal cause or nature, respectively, of mind and extension.

In the fourth place, it is argued that what is known must be present to the mind or intimately united with it, and, since corporeal things cannot be so present to the mind, they cannot be directly known. This is based on an assumption that knowledge involves or consists in a kind of mystic union of the knower with the known. The word "presence" is, however, woefully ambiguous. The content of an act of knowledge is no doubt present or contained in that act. But such "objective presence" must not be interpreted after the manner of local presence or inclusion, on the analogy of an image or picture. For the relationship expressed in the term "objective presence," i.e. presence as a content known, is a relationship peculiar to the mind,—that indeed which constitutes its very essence,—and it cannot be expected that we should find analogous relations outside the mind. The word "presence" is really misleading, and properly understood, the principle that to be known an object must be present to the mind is a bare tautology, amounting merely to the assertion that in order to know a thing it is necessary that the thing should be known.

Arnauld is, in fact, prepared to give an analysis of the nature of apprehension (*perception*, as he calls it), which will obviate the need of assuming "êtres représentatifs." Every idea, he urges, though in itself a unitary whole, has yet two relations. In the first place, it is related to the soul which it modifies, i.e. it involves an act or process of the mind; in the second place, it is related to the thing known, in so far as it is "objectively," i.e. as a content of the mind, present to the mind. Apprehension is always the apprehension *of* a content. The act of apprehending includes or contains the content apprehended. But these two relations do

not entitle us to speak of two different entities. We are not, in other words, entitled to hypostatise the idea in so far as it indicates the objective presence of an object to the mind, and regard it as something which has an existence, prior to all perception, and which must act upon the mind, in order to be perceived by it. In an act of knowing there is only one thing to which existence ought to be ascribed, the modification, namely, of the soul, the process or event of knowing; but though this modification is the perception of something which is known, we are not concerned here with an additional entity, forming part of the sum of existence. The idea of the sun is the sun in so far as it is known, *secundum esse quod habet in cognoscente*; it is a way of knowing the sun, it is the sun in so far as it is in my mind, not formally as it is in the sky, but objectively, i.e. as a content of an act of knowledge. But it is absurd to interpret this notion of an "intelligible" sun, or an idea of the sun, as being a real existing object, standing between the mind and the real external sun, and rendering a knowledge of the latter for ever impossible.

It follows that the act of apprehending and the content or idea apprehended, though distinguishable, are not separable, but are rather aspects of one and the same concrete fact. As against this position, Malebranche had argued, that while ideas are universal in content, eternal and immutable, the acts of the individual finite mind are temporal and changing, and from this disparity between the ideas and the acts of knowledge he concluded that they must be separate entities, the former existing in the mind of God, the latter being modifications of the finite subject. But, Arnauld urges, if it be recognised that ideas are not separate existents, in some mysterious manner fused with the mind, but that they are rather parts of a system of truth, ways in which we arrive at a knowledge of reality, there is no reason why an act which is individual should not be capable of apprehending that which is not individual. Malebranche's difficulty is due, in other words, to his hypostatisation of ideas and to a false interpretation of the nature of "objective" presence. In another connection,[1] Arnauld points out that the universality and eternity of truths does not warrant us in hypostatising these truths and in regarding them as "êtres subsistants." "When we say a thing is always and everywhere, we may mean two

[1] *Régles du bon sens, Œuvres,* Tome XL.

things. We may mean that it has positive existence in all places and throughout all times, and in this sense God only can be said to be everywhere. On the other hand, we may mean that it is not attached to any place or time, and in this sense, every universal is always and everywhere. It is in this sense that the truth $2 + 3 = 5$ is *ubique et semper*, and from this it does not follow that it is in God." So with eternity. In one sense, the term is applicable to a being that has existence always, without beginning or end, and none but God can be eternal in this sense. On the other hand, " many things are called eternal which are only in our mind, which are not existing beings, for the simple reason that they are not attached to any time. General terms, such as man in general, or a circle in general, etc., are eternal in this sense." Arnauld might have added that this is no less true of a content which is particular than of one which is universal. In neither case is the idea a separate existence; in both cases the act or process of knowing is concrete and particular, but this circumstance does not preclude it from apprehending that which is of different nature from itself.

To Malebranche, however, the credit is due of deepening the distinction between essence and existence and of laying stress on the universality and necessity of truth and its independence of the arbitrary will of God. He recognised that the essences of things are not to be identified with their existence. At the same time, this negative determination was insensibly transmuted by him into a mysterious and baffling positive. He tended to hypostatise the essences and to make them into veritable existences, forgetful of the fact that when this is done, they can, in the first place, no longer serve the purpose of accounting for the universality of knowledge, since as existences they cannot but be particulars; and, in the second place, that they stand between the mind and the world of particular, concrete fact, and render a knowledge of the latter for ever impossible. In other words, if the essences or ideas be regarded as having a transcendent existence, they are open to the charge which Aristotle brought against Plato's Ideas, that they afford no explanation, on the one hand, of the possibility and nature of knowledge, or, on the other hand, of the existence of a world of particulars.

Part III
MALEBRANCHE'S METAPHYSIC

A. The Nature and Attributes of God.

Underlying Malebranche's theory of knowledge, and indeed the whole of his philosophy, is the thought, that not only do we see all things in God, but that in a sense all things are in God. He himself describes his philosophy as a commentary on St. Paul's text, "in Him we live, and move, and have our being."

God is described by him often in terminology which would identify the divine nature with mere indeterminate being, e.g. the being of beings (*être des êtres*), the universal being. At other times, God is described as *ens realissimum*, containing within Himself all that is real in finite things, actual and possible, though not exhausted in them, and not partaking in their limitations. Using Platonic language, he speaks of finite things as made up of being and non-being, while in the infinitely perfect being there is no non-being. God possesses whatever there is of positive reality in all things, without their limitations. The divine being is, at the same time, one and many, comprising an infinity of different perfections, each containing all the others without any real distinction, and all constituting a perfect unity.

Malebranche conceived the existence of God as an immediate certainty. While Descartes had proved the existence of God by a process of inference from the idea of God, as from effect to cause, or from essence to existence, in the sense that existence being a perfection, it is involved in the idea of that which is the most perfect, Malebranche urged that no process of inference is here required, that to think of God is sufficient to prove God's existence. For although we know all things

in and through ideas or representative beings, we cannot know God in the same way. There is no idea of God, no archetype which can be representative of Him. Being and the idea of being, existence and essence, are here identical. There can be no "être représentatif" of God other than God Himself.

God, or the Infinite, containing within Himself the perfections of all things, and yet remaining a simple and individual essence, is incomprehensible to the human mind. Nevertheless, we may, by reference to the idea of an infinitely perfect being, discover some of His attributes. In the first place, we may inquire whether God can be described as *res cogitans*. God, as has been already indicated, contains within Himself the orders of truth and righteousness, and has, therefore, knowledge and volition. What precisely the nature of these processes may be we cannot tell, even in the case of finite minds, since there is no idea of the soul. But it is clear that there are important differences between our modes of knowing and those of God. Thought for us involves, at any rate, the distinction between the act or process of thinking and the content, or idea, as Malebranche calls it, of which by means of the former we become aware. Now, this idea is in the mind of God, while the act or perception is peculiar to each individual. Is there, then, a similar duality in the case of God? It would appear that in God the ideas are in some incomprehensible manner fused and united in His single essence, allowing of no distinction, and in that case self-consciousness is not applicable to God's essence. If, on the other hand, emphasis be laid upon that aspect of Malebranche's teaching in which he makes use of the conception of a hierarchy of ideas, constituting the two orders of truth and righteousness, it becomes still more obvious that God is not a self-conscious personality, but a system of Ideas, such as we find in the philosophy of Plato.

With regard to the will, similar difficulties arise. Malebranche realises that the Divine volition cannot consist in a determination by anything outside of God, and he urges that it is rather the invincible love which God has for His own substance, the satisfaction and beatitude which He finds in His own perfection. Now, will, as we are familiar with it, in our own experience, involves always the presence of ideas, together with the recognition of a reality with which those ideas stand in contrast; we have, as Mr. Bradley puts it, an existing not-

self, together with the idea of its change. But anything of this kind is utterly precluded in the case of God, as conceived by Malebranche. Again, God is eternal, immutable, and the acts of God's volition are likewise eternal and immutable. Yet acts which do not involve any change are simply not acts, as we know them. It seems clear that, of God, as conceived by Malebranche, we may say, as Spinoza said of Substance, that "the intellect which would constitute the essence of God must differ *toto cælo* from our will and intellect, nor can they agree in anything save in name, nor any more than the Dog as a celestial constellation and the dog as a barking animal agree." [1]

In the second place, it may be asked whether God can be described as *res extensa*. God is said by Malebranche to possess the attribute of immensity. Thereby the omnipresence of God is indicated, His power of being one and many, of penetrating all things and conferring upon them being, His possession of all perfections in indissoluble, distinctionless unity. And Malebranche tries to throw some light on this incomprehensible attribute by comparing it with eternity. God is eternal, and, although times and moments succeed one another in His eternity, He is all that He is, without temporal succession. So God is immense, and though corporeal things are extended in His immensity, He Himself is not extended. He fills all His substance without local extension. In His existence and duration there is no past and no future; in His immensity there are no parts and no divisions. God is all that He is whenever and wherever He is. He is not so much in the world as the world is in Him, just as eternity is not so much in time as time is in eternity. Malebranche insists that by the omnipresence of God he does not mean merely that God exercises activity everywhere; the analogy of the presence of the soul in the body does not seem to him appropriate. In truth, the soul is not in the body, nor the body in the soul. Both alike are in the divine substance, minds in the divine reason and bodies in the divine immensity.

The divine immensity is not to be identified with intelligible extension. The former, indicating as it does the mystic presence in God of all perfections in indissoluble unity, is quite incomprehensible to the finite mind. The latter, on the other hand, is essentially, as its name indicates, intelligible. It is

[1] *Ethics*, Pt. I, prop. 17. *Scholium.*

the idea of matter, that in God which is representative of corporeal things, the ground of all mathematical relations, the archetype or model, in accordance with which God created the material world. Intelligible extension is thus distinguished, firstly, from the divine immensity, and, secondly, from local, material, or created extension. In his discussion with Arnauld and De Mairan, Malebranche was driven to elaborate these distinctions in order to free himself from the charge of Spinozism which these critics brought against him. Arnauld urged that it follows from Malebranche's teaching that God is extended, or that He contains extension within Himself, "formally" and not merely "eminently." Malebranche himself had argued that the idea of extension could not be in the finite soul, on the ground that this would make the soul material. Yet, "objectively," or as a content of mind, the idea of extension might well be in the finite mind, without the latter thereby becoming extended or material. It followed, therefore, that by presence in the mind, Malebranche, when he argued in the way indicated, must have meant formal or actual presence, but in that case to say that God contains intelligible extension in His mind, amounts to saying that God is extended. Malebranche replied that extension exists in God, not merely in ideal fashion, but effectively (*effectivement*), yet he will not have it that it exists in God formally. It is clear, however, that he is here quite uncertain of his ground, and ultimately he takes refuge in the unknowableness of God. God, he says, contains the idea of matter "eminently," but this idea is not a modification of God, for God can have no modifications. Again, the idea or essence of matter is not identical with the existence of material things. It is, indeed, characteristic of God's infinitude that He contains within Himself all that is real in finite things, but finite things are not modes of His being, but rather imperfect imitations of their essences in His mind.

The subject is further dealt with in the ninth *Méditation*, the *Entretien d'un Philosophe avec un Philosophe chinois*, and above all in the correspondence with De Mairan.[1] Is not, De Mairan asked, local or material or created extension the model or "affection" of a substance, a substance which in itself

[1] Cf. *Méditations Métaphysiques et Correspondance de N. Malebranche avec J. J. Dortous de Mairan, sur des sujets métaphysiques.* Ed. by Feuillet de Conches, 1841.

is not locally extended but which admits of modifications, in the form of locally extended bodies, and is not intelligible extension, the substance of which they are modifications? Admittedly the idea of extension is infinite, eternal, necessary; but since we can assert of anything that which is clearly involved in the idea of it, it follows that extension is identical with God, for otherwise there would be an infinite substance, which yet is not God. Moreover, this infinite substance must be the essence of corporeal things, unless it can be shown that the extension which is involved in our conception of corporeal things is an extension other than that which is called by Malebranche intelligible. If you deny that we can infer the nature of a thing from the idea which is representative of it, then it would no longer follow that God Himself is infinite. On the other hand, if, *per impossibile*, it is maintained that intelligible extension is merely an idea of God, an idea without an ideatum, then of what avail is it to argue about the existence of corporeal things? Is it not clear that there can in such case be no corporeal things, and that the revelation of which Malebranche speaks is deceptive in their regard?

Malebranche's answer is a troubled and evasive one. Spinoza's mistake lay, according to him, in confusing the ideas of things with the things themselves. No doubt the idea of extension, i.e. intelligible extension, is eternal, necessary, infinite, and, therefore, in God, is in fact God, for all that is in God is consubstantial with Him; but created extension is neither eternal nor infinite, and so far from its possessing necessary existence, we only know that it exists by means of revelation, natural or supernatural. From the idea of extension the transition cannot be made to the existence of an infinite extension. Only the properties of a thing can be deduced from its idea, not its existence; for the existence is not a part of its essence, but is dependent upon the will of God. The created world is not a modification of God, for the Infinite can have no modifications. Not only so. Particular bodies are not modifications of the idea of extension, but are *parts* of created extension. The "modes" of extension are its figures, yet it is meaningless to speak of Rome and Paris as modifications of extension. Spinoza is making an incorrect use of the conception of "mode," and his identification of intelligible with created extension is due to his unwarranted rejection of the notion of

creation. Malebranche here ignores the proofs furnished by Spinoza of the impossibility of creation consistently with the definition of Substance. And he himself often speaks of finite things as *participations* in the divine substance. It is difficult to see what advantage this word has over the term "mode" or "modification." Participations are, no doubt, distinguished by him from parts, but then Spinoza would never have said that Substance had parts, and indeed he showed clearly that it could have none. All that Malebranche says with regard to the divine immensity applies equally well to Spinoza's notion of Substance. The former term is, in fact, used by Spinoza in the *Cogitata Metaphysica*. The comparison of immensity with eternity and the denial of temporal succession and local extendedness to God find a close parallel in the distinction that Spinoza makes between duration and eternity and his description of quantity, number, etc., as mere aids to the imagination and as not belonging to Substance *sub specie æternitatis*.[1] Once more, Malebranche argues, as we have seen, that from the idea of infinite extension, we cannot infer that the extension of which the world is made is infinite, despite the Cartesian principle that what we can assert of anything whatever is involved in the idea representative of it. But, if from an idea *admittedly infinite* we cannot infer necessary existence, then doubt might be thrown on the existence and infinitude of God, and even if a plausible case could be made out for regarding the idea of God as an exception in this respect, it would still follow that *if* material extension exists, it must be infinite, since infinity is involved in the idea which is representative of it. But, as we have seen, Malebranche admits, although on the evidence of faith, the existence of the material world, and if the material world exists there must exist an infinite substance outside of God, which on Malebranche's premises should be impossible. It is true he denied the infinity of the material world, but it is hard to see how the denial can be justified. It would seem, then, that Malebranche does not succeed in refuting the argument of de Mairan, that, logically developed, the theory of intelligible extension leads to the doctrine of Spinoza. Malebranche himself appears to have been aware of the weakness of his position, for the later letters are full of evasions, and in the end he frankly appeals to faith: "Le vraie fidèle n'écoute

[1] *Ethics*, I, prop. 15, *Scholium*, and *Letter to Myer*.

pas seulement ceux qui attaquent la foi, de peur d'être embarassé par des objections qu'il ne pourroit pas resoudre; car perdre la foi, c'est tout perdre, et la foi ne vient que par la revelation et non de la speculation des idées claires, des mathematiques et des nombres." [1] The vital point of Malebranche's answer consists, however, in his insistence upon the fact of creation. Yet, in dealing with this notion, he simply takes refuge in the unknowableness and omnipotence of God. Seeing the idea of extension within himself, God can create something that corresponds to it. How the will of God has such power we cannot say, since we have no clear idea of what constitutes the divine power and will. Thus the whole world of particular fact is left unexplained. It is, moreover, difficult to see why the volition to create the world should be arbitrary, while all other volitions of God are determined by the immutable order of His perfections; and this question seems to be all the more troublesome, because Malebranche was in the end compelled to suggest means—though theological in character—whereby the created world has been made worthy of the divine will, so that the inquiry is forced upon us whether, this being so, the creation of the world must not be regarded as following necessarily from the divine nature.

To return now to the further enumeration of God's attributes. Since God is infinitely perfect and contains all reality within Himself, He is independent and cannot be determined by anything outside Himself. It follows that He is also unchangeable. In the thoughts and volitions of God there is no succession; He knows all and wills all by an eternal, immutable act. The whole world-process is due to general laws established by God from all eternity. The changes observable in the universe are due not to changes in these laws, but to the action of "occasional" causes. The difficulty of this position will be dealt with later. Meanwhile, it is to be observed that, in Malebranche's view, the immutability of God does not conflict with His freedom. The volitions of God are determined by the immutable order of His perfections, yet this means that God is determined not by outward circumstances but by the excellence of His own nature. Malebranche rejects the "liberty of indifference" that was ascribed to God by Descartes. "Ce

[1] *Méditations Métaphysiques et Correspondance de N. Malebranche avec J. J. Dortous de Mairan*, 1841, p. 147.

faux principe que Dieu n'a pas d'autre règle en ses desseins que sa pure volonté, répand des ténèbres si épaisses qu'il confond le bien avec le mal, le vrai avec le faux, et fait de toutes choses un chaos où l'esprit ne connaît plus rien." [1] God cannot will that what is false shall be true, nor can He act in a way which does not conform with the immutable order of His perfections—a contention which has, as already noted, important bearing upon Malebranche's view of knowledge.

B. God's Relation to the World.

Having dealt with the attributes of God, as He is in Himself, at any rate in so far as the human mind can reach that which is in essence incomprehensible, Malebranche further tries to deal with God in His "ways," and to show how God goes, so to speak, outside Himself. Here he is profoundly anxious lest he should be involved in the meshes of the "wretched" (*le misérable*) Spinoza. "We are," so Aristes represents Spinoza as maintaining, "but we are not made. We are a necessary emanation from the divine being. We form a part of the divine being. The infinitely perfect being is the universe, is the assemblage of all that is." It was to escape from this danger that Malebranche was so strenuous in emphasising the notion of creation. He tries to prove that the universe is not uncreated. Sometimes he argues that matter cannot be a necessary emanation from the divinity, because God is fully self-sufficient—an argument which is certainly far from convincing, since, if matter is in some way involved in the divine nature, it would constitute part of the abundance wherewith He is satisfied and not something external to Him and requiring Him to come out of Himself in order to attain satisfaction. Similar considerations apply, perhaps, to the argument insisted on by Malebranche in the ninth *Méditation*, the *Entretien avec un Philosophe chinois*, and elsewhere. If matter were uncreated, he urges, God could not move it, for He could only move it if He had knowledge of it, but He can only know it if He Himself gave it being, seeing that nothing can act upon Him, or illumine Him from the outside. Movement and creation, in fact, alike depend upon God and involve an activity of the same kind. Movement means successive creation, on the part of God, of a corporeal thing in different places. God does not make things and then com-

[1] Cf. *Écl. à la Recherche*, VIII, X.

municate to them a moving force. The moving force of bodies consists in the efficacy of Him who gives them being incessantly and successively in different places. All activity, however small, is divine and infinite. It follows, then, that if God did not create matter, He would not be able to move it, and that either there would be no movement or change, or else change would have no producing cause, and there would be no wisdom regulating it. It would not be difficult to show that, even accepting Malebranche's doctrine of creation, it would be no easy matter to reconcile change and movement with the immutability which is one of God's attributes. No doubt this obstacle remains in any pantheistic doctrine. But the above arguments surely have force only against the position that matter is uncreated and likewise something foreign or external to the divine substance, in which case, certainly, God could neither know nor move it. They do not apply as against the view that extension is an integral element in or, as in Spinoza's metaphysic, an Attribute of the divine Substance, for in that case no action from the outside world would be required to render it possible for God either to know or to move matter. As regards the whole doctrine of creation, Malebranche was in the end compelled, as we have seen, to take refuge in an asylum of ignorance. We have no right to ask, he urges, how being can come from non-being. God is omnipotent, and, having the idea of extension within Himself, He can create something that corresponds to it. Though Malebranche emphatically repudiated all arbitrary factors when dealing with the nature of truth, he is, strangely enough, content to base his explanation of the entire world of particular facts upon "arbitrariness of production" on the part of God.

C. The Theory of Occasionalism.

To understand more fully the relation, as Malebranche conceived it, between God and the created world, we must deal with his doctrine of causality. In this connection, his work exhibits close continuity, logical and historical, with that of Descartes. The very definition which Descartes gave of substance, as a thing which exists in such a way as to need nothing else in order to exist, showed that there could only be one substance. Descartes, indeed, pointed out that the term "substance" does not apply to God and finite things univo-

cally. He was, however, content to leave the problem thus raised by saying that finite things exist only by the *concourse* of God.[1] The dependence of finite things upon God becomes apparent also in Descartes' doctrine of continuous creation. Time, according to Descartes, is discrete in nature, and its parts are mutually independent, so that "from the fact that we are now it does not necessarily follow that we shall be a moment afterwards, unless some cause, namely, that which produces us, shall, as it were, continuously reproduce us, i.e. conserve us."[2] This argument was, as we shall see, used by the Cartesians in support of the doctrine of occasionalism. Further, Descartes regarded matter as identical with passive extension, and, therefore, as in itself inert. Movement had thus to come to it from the outside. Movement, or transference of a body from one vicinity to another, was distinguished from force which was the cause of such transference. The general cause of all movement was God, who created matter along with motion and rest, and who now by His "concourse" alone preserves in the whole the same amount of motion and rest that He had originally assigned to it. In addition there were *particular* causes, "by which it happens that each of the parts of matter acquires the motion that it had not before." Descartes does not explain what precisely is meant by the "concourse of God"; and it is easy to see that, logically developed, what he is here saying would lead to the view that God is the only force, and that corporeal things are merely instruments of the divine activity.

Finally, there is yet another line of consideration followed by Descartes which is perhaps historically the most important for the development of the doctrine of occasionalism—namely, that which arises from the disparate character assigned by him to mind and matter and the difficulty of their being brought into connection with one another in the processes of knowing and willing. That Descartes himself recognised the difficulty is evident from the often quoted sentence, "the human mind is not capable of conceiving the difference of essence between soul and body and at the same time their union, for it would then be necessary to conceive both as a single being and at the same time as two different beings, which is a contradiction."[3]

[1] *Principles*, Pt. I, LI. [2] *Ibid.*, Pt. I, XXI.

[3] Cf. the first two letters to Elizabeth in the spring of 1643. (*Œuvres*, Tome IX, pp. 123-35.)

The members of the Cartesian School dealt with all the points to which I have been referring. Here only a brief summary can be given of the views of the more representative Cartesians of whose influence upon Malebranche there can be no manner of doubt.

I note, then, firstly the views of De la Forge,[1] whose position may be summed up thus:

1. In the sphere of extension all real efficacy and power reside in God. Corporeal things are only secondary or occasional causes which determine the activity of the first cause, in accordance with certain laws.
2. The apparent action of the mutually disparate elements of extension and thought upon each other is explained by the intervention of God, who institutes a union between them. It does not imply interaction but merely a parallelism due to the will of God.
3. Voluntary ideas and voluntary movements are caused by the soul itself. This somewhat inconsistent exception is made in the interests of freedom.

Even the amount of real power which is thus with hesitation left to the finite subject is denied by Cordemoy.[2] The real cause of the movement of corporeal things is God, who acts in accordance with inviolable laws. Our will is merely the "occasion" which determines God to turn the movements initiated by Him in certain material entities in the direction we desire.

Similar lines of thought were pursued, apparently independently, in Holland, by Clauberg and Geulincx, but whether they exercised any influence on the reflection of Malebranche is uncertain. Malebranche devotes a considerable portion of his writings to the subject, but in the main his arguments are the same throughout. The idea of force or power in finite things is unintelligible. In the case of God, force or efficacy *is* conceivable, for God's will being absolute, His volitions must necessarily be followed by their effects, but there is no contradiction in the action of a finite thing not being followed by any effects Real causation involves either partial or entire creation out of nothing, and such creation is only possible for

[1] *Traité de l'esprit de l'homme.*
[2] *Le Discernement de l'âme et du corps*, 1666.

God. Regularity of succession does not prove necessity of connection, nor does it warrant us in assuming the existence of forces within corporeal things, or in imagining that they can of themselves determine the rate and direction of their own movements. To attribute forces to corporeal things evinces gross anthropomorphism and involves the ascription to them of sensations like our own and of an intelligence truly marvellous. Even in the case of our voluntary movements, we must not assume a necessary connection between our volition and our movement. "Autre chose est effort, autre chose est efficace."

After the manner of Descartes and de la Forge, Malebranche uses the conception of continuous creation. Creation and conservation are one and the same act. God is, therefore, the cause of a corporeal thing's existence at all times and at all places. Since movement is the existence of a corporeal thing successively in different places, it is necessary that the cause which gave it being in the place in which it was at first should continue to give it being in all the places which it may successively occupy during transportation. The cause of local movement is, accordingly, the same as that which gave it being.

Similar considerations apply to the problems of body and mind. If a corporeal thing is unable to move another corporeal thing, still less can it move the mind. Neither has the soul any power or efficacy of its own. It can neither produce ideas nor initiate movements. There is no real union between the soul and the body. It is with God alone that we are truly united; and just as God is responsible for all the changes in the physical world, so He is the source of all the faculties of the soul. Finite minds and bodies are secondary or occasional causes. There is no interaction between them, but there is a correspondence between their modifications, because God acts in accordance with certain laws which bring about such correspondence. Thus, the laws of the communication of movement explain all the changes in the material world and the occasional cause which determines the exercise of these laws, i.e. the distribution of movement in the shock or impact of corporeal things. In like manner, the laws of the conjunction of soul and body account for the mutual dependence of the modifications of these two substances; and, in this case, our desires are the occasional

causes of the movement of our bodies, and our attention is the occasional cause of the ideas which we receive from God.

It will be apparent that Malebranche's occasionalism is a natural and legitimate development of Cartesian principles. Some recent writers find, however, in Malebranche's doctrine the origin of the problem of Hume and Kant, and are of opinion that Malebranche reaches what they call the modern scientific view of a causal nexus, a view which refuses to enter into questions of necessary relationship and confines itself to the discovery of descriptive or empirical laws. Malebranche and Hume, they argue, agree in regard to the following two points :—

1. That the notion of causality rests upon our experience of sequence.
2. That there is no necessary connection between cause and effect.

But Malebranche escapes, it is maintained, from Hume's scepticism in a manner analogous to that of Kant. He starts with the notion of Being in general which is to be conceived, after the analogy of a logical system, as the ground of all change. Being, or the system of reality, is an objective thought, and, being identical with itself, is the source of the constancy and uniformity of nature. In this way, the category of causality has an objective significance, and is not merely a category of the understanding. When Malebranche speaks of God as the only force, he does so, it is urged, only as a protest, under cover of theological expressions, against the occult forces ascribed to finite things, and in order to prove that God is the highest ground and that the laws of nature are His constant volitions. Some of the writers referred to, notably Novaro, dismiss the influence of Descartes, de la Forge, Cordemoy and other Cartesians as of little importance, and claim for Malebranche the discovery of a conception of causality identical with that of modern scientific writers. Such an interpretation is not, however, faithful to the spirit of Malebranche's teaching. Even if it were adopted, the interpretation would fail to furnish us with a consistent theory ; for the question would at once arise whether a ground which is admittedly unintelligible can be called a ground. If God, or Being, is to be conceived as the ground of all change, then all the processes of change ought to be shown to follow logically from that ground. But, so far is this from being the

case, that Malebranche has difficulty in explaining how change is possible at all, consistently with the unity, identity and immutability of the divine being. God, he says, does not change; God's decrees are eternal and immutable; nevertheless, the effects of these decrees are infinite and produce thousands upon thousands of changes in the universe. This explanation, difficult enough upon any interpretation of occasionalism, loses all meaning if we adopt Novaro's view. For, then, the occasional causes themselves become parts of the process whereby the objective thought unfolds itself, and in that case we cannot ascribe change to them and, at the same time, insist on the immutable character of the divine activity. Further, Novaro has entirely ignored the immense difference that really subsists between Hume and Malebranche in regard to causality. Malebranche does not, in truth, deny a necessary connection between cause and effect. He simply insists that such necessary connection is to be found only between one unique cause, namely, God, and all effects; and, as against this position, Hume was clearly right, when, in discussing this very point, he insisted that force is no more intelligible in the divine being than in any other being. It is true Malebranche himself admits that the divine power is inexplicable; but throughout he takes refuge in the thought of God's omnipotence and insists that between the will of God and its effects there must be a necessary connection, since God's volitions are bound to be efficacious. It remains to add that Novaro dismisses much too lightly Malebranche's doctrine of creation as a mere concession to religious opinions. Religion and philosophy were not so sharply divided in Malebranche's thought. He did not suppose that religious dogmas were out of harmony with the principles of reason. Natural revelation and divine revelation were on a level in this respect. The deliverances of both had to be accepted as ultimate data. There are, it is true, many pantheistic elements in Malebranche's philosophy, but there can be no doubt that he himself resisted and resented such tendencies, or that it was his desire to conceive of God as a personal self-conscious being, and consequently that the doctrine of occasionalism was by him seriously intended to offer an explanation of change and movement on strictly theistic lines.

Does occasionalism offer a rational solution of its own problem? It must be admitted that the difficulties which it

sought to resolve, the difficulties arising out of the unintelligible character of force or agency, and of the disparate character of mind and matter, are not disposed of by having recourse to God, in whom the problem recurs anew and to whom everything is possible only because God is incomprehensible. If force, or agency, be unintelligible in finite things, it is, as Hume urged, equally unintelligible in the divine being; and if things of disparate nature cannot act upon one another, it is difficult to see how the movement of our bodily organs, for example, or the movement of any material body, can determine God to reveal ideas to us, or how the presence of ideas in our minds can enable God to move our bodily organs. The intervention of God is nothing short of a miracle and cannot in any sense be said to constitute a rational explanation.[1] To some extent, this had been already pointed out by Fontenelle.[2] The same difficulties, he argued, come to the front when we are told that a corporeal thing is set in motion because God wills it so as when we are told that it is set in motion by another corporeal thing. In the former case, I can see merely that it is so because God wills it, but this a mere necessity of fact, while as to the why and the wherefore I am utterly ignorant, and, "s'il fallait entendre ces sortes des comment-la je ne trouverai pas que Dieu même fut une cause véritable d'aucun effet."

But, perhaps, the most serious objection which can be urged against occasionalism is that it virtually reduces all finite things, both minds and corporeal things, to non-entities, or, at the most, to modifications of the divine being. It is in and through God alone, as we have seen, that we know, love or feel; but if so, God is everything and man counts for nothing; man's existence becomes something to which no intelligible meaning can be assigned. Again, as Fontenelle pointed out, all the arguments that Malebranche urged against attributing efficacy to finite beings might with equal justice be urged against their existence.

Malebranche argues that though secondary causes have no

[1] Malebranche himself sometimes admits this. Cf. *Réponse à Régis* (Paris, 1693), Ch. II., p. 35. "On ne doit pas exiger de moi que j'explique plus clairement la manière dont Dieu agit sans cesse dans les esprits. J'avoue que je n'en sais pas davantage."

[2] *Doutes sur le système physique des causes occasionelles* (1686).

efficacy of their own, they nevertheless serve the purpose of determining the activity of God, in virtue of the general laws which God has prescribed to Himself. But, since the "occasions" themselves are expressions of the divine activity, and would not have come to be had it not been for that activity, it is clear that they are mere instruments or means employed by God to produce certain effects. Thus, an impact is the occasional cause of the movements of corporeal things, our desires and our attention are the occasional causes of our ideas and the movement of our bodily organs; but since God is also the cause of the impact of corporeal things, of our desires and of our attention, the term "occasion" loses its meaning, and we are left with a series of phenomena succeeding one another in regular order—an order in which the divine activity finds expression. It is thus apparent that along this line of thought Malebranche's position leads to a thoroughgoing pantheism, such as was worked out by Spinoza. Moreover, in the light of these considerations, it is clear that Malebranche was not justified in throwing the burden of all that could not consistently be ascribed to God upon finite things. God is eternal and immutable, he argued, when he wished to explain the fact of change, and only His effects change. Yet, if the effects themselves are expressions of the divine activity, change in them involves change in God. Similarly, in order to justify the irregularities we observe in the world, Malebranche has recourse to the general character of God's mode of operation. God, he says, acts only by means of general volitions, but these volitions are determined to activity by occasional causes. Thus, for example, God alone is the cause of movements, yet God only moves corporeal things on the occasion of an impulse or impact. But, as Arnauld points out, the contention would only be plausible, if corporeal things came into contact of their own accord; but if the impact or encounter of corporeal things, like all effects in nature, is due to the volition of God, the explanation loses its meaning; and even if a combination of millions of occasional causes were necessary to bring about, say the fall of a fruit, God would not on that account cease to be the cause of the fall of that fruit.[1] It is, in short, a flagrant contradiction to insist that God is the sole cause of everything that takes place in the world and, at the same time, to urge that God only acts

[1] Arnauld, *Réflexions philosophiques et théologiques*, I.

as a universal cause, whose general volitions are determined to activity by the changeable desires of His creatures or by the impacts of corporeal things, and to assign to the occasional causes everything that we find to be contradictory of the attributes of God.

The difficulties involved in making God the sole principle of activity were most keenly felt by Malebranche himself when dealing with the problem of freedom. Will is the faculty of receiving inclinations, and, as we are incapable of modifying ourselves, these inclinations must come to us from God. Now, God can have Himself alone for the end or motive of His activity, and God's will is nothing but the infinite love which He has for His own substance. He also loves created things in so far as they participate in His being or imitate His perfections. He loves them in accordance with the degree of perfection to which they attain, since He loves nothing except in accordance with the immutable order of His perfections. Such immutable order is not only the inviolable law of the divine will, but also the "natural and necessary" law of all intelligent minds, since God could not give to created beings a will which would tend whither His own will does not tend, or which would love things not in accordance with the relations in which they stand to His own substance, which He loves infinitely. Hence, by their very nature, finite minds must love God, and it is this natural movement towards the Good which God incessantly impresses upon us that, properly speaking, constitutes our will. Of our will we are not masters, since we cannot but wish for our own happiness, seeing that we cannot but love the Good. Indeed, in so far as we follow the tendency towards the Good, it is not we ourselves who act, or at any rate our action cannot be distinguished from that of God. Nevertheless, Malebranche thinks that man is free, for man is master of his will in regard to particular goods. The movement towards the Good in general is impressed upon us by God "invincibly;" but, since no particular good can exhaust all that is contained in the general Good, God does not move us necessarily or invincibly towards the love of any particular good, and we have, therefore, the power to accept or reject it. Being united with God who contains the perfections of all things, we are able to think or to have an idea of anything we want, so long as our mental capacity is not absorbed by passions or feelings due to occurrences in our bodily organ-

isms; and, accordingly, when any particular good is presented to us, we have the power of suspending our judgment, or of calling up the ideas of other goods or of the supreme Good, and of comparing the particular good before us with the supreme good; and it is this power which constitutes our freedom.

Malebranche is quite aware of the difficulties of the solution. Thus, in the *Méditations Métaphysiques* he says: " J'ai de la peine a comprendre comment moi qui suis sans action et sans mouvement, je puis m'arreter a un bien particulier "; and, in truth, it is impossible to see how the solution can be maintained consistently with his general position. He admits that it is God who moves us towards the Good in general, represents to us the ideas of particular goods, gives us a feeling of those particular goods, and moves us towards them; nevertheless, he insists, we have the power, by means of an act of attention, to call up other ideas and so suspend our judgment. But surely this act of attention must itself ultimately be due to God, since it involves at least an arrest of the movement towards the particular good at the moment before us, and such an arrest is a *real act* which cannot be ascribed to the finite mind consistently with the principle that God alone is the author of all our modifications. The sole reason which Malebranche offers, in support of his contention, is that we have an inner feeling of our freedom, just as we have of pleasure and pain. If we doubt our freedom, he adds, because we have no clear idea of it, we should also doubt our feelings of pleasure and pain, and indeed our existence, since we are only aware of our existence by an inner feeling. Yet Malebranche himself has warned us against placing any reliance upon our feelings, e.g. our feeling of effort, when dealing with the problem of causality, and is there any reason why we should trust our inner feelings more in this connection? And further, on Malebranche's own showing, feelings of pleasure and pain and sensations often deceive us, since they cause us to attribute sensible qualities to external things and to imagine that they are initiated by ourselves, whereas in truth they are initiated by God. May not a similar argument apply to the feeling we have of freedom? Finally, it should be noted that Malebranche takes away with one hand what he has given with the other. There is, he says, nothing real in our actions. When we give positive consent to a particular good, this act of positive con-

sent is merely a *continuation* of the movement implanted in our minds by God. Only when we consent to a sinful impulse is the action our own; but even then there is nothing real in our action, it is a mere "défaut," "une cessation d'examiner," "un acte immanent qui ne produit rien de physique dans notre substance," "un acte qui ne fait rien." If, however, this be so, it can only be a mere semblance of freedom which is left to us, and it becomes clear that all which is real and positive in the finite mind is lost and absorbed in the divine activity.

D. Malebranche's Speculation in relation to Neo-Platonism, Cartesianism, and the Monadology of Leibniz.

The main difficulties in the philosophy of Malebranche, it will now be manifest, centre round the questions arising in regard to the relations between the finite and the infinite, the particular and the universal. The hypostatisation of ideas or essences and the ascription to them of a veritable existence rendered a knowledge of the particular inexplicable and the existence of the particular unintelligible. The world of finite things can find no real place in Malebranche's system, apart from recourse to the doctrine of creation, and on his own showing creation is an arbitrary act and does not follow necessarily from the immutable order of ideas which constitutes the divine mind. Moreover, in ascribing existence to the ideas, Malebranche makes it impossible to understand how God can be a self-conscious being and to avoid the conclusion that God is other than a system of Ideas, such as we find in the philosophy of Plato.

Where he is not following St. Augustine and the neo-Platonists, Malebranche's teaching may be regarded as following logically from the teaching of Descartes. The essential principles of method, the emphasis on the significance of clearness and distinctness, the mathematical or mechanical explanation of nature, are common to both philosophers. Malebranche retains, too, the dualistic theory of mind and matter despite his doctrine of intelligible extension. There are, however, as we have seen, important points of difference between them, and recently the tendency seems to be to emphasise these points of difference. Some French writers have even spoken of Male-

branche's "anti-Cartesianism." Now, there can be no doubt that in their deeper attitude to the problems of philosophy, Malebranche and Descartes do differ profoundly. Descartes aimed at separating metaphysics from religion and theology. He may have thought them quite compatible, but nevertheless he tried to keep them apart. Malebranche, on the contrary, aims to bring about their fusion and union. Religion was for him thoroughly rational, metaphysics essentially religious. "La religion c'est la vraie philosophie."[1] He did not think they could ever conflict with one another. The data of religious experience furnished by revelation and the traditions of the Church were on a level with all other data of experience and had to be included and interpreted in any rational philosophical system.[2] Moreover, metaphysical speculation was not for him, as it was for Descartes, merely a search for truth. It was a means of communion with the Eternal Reason, the Divine Logos, a means of sharing in that vision which is salvation. While in Descartes' works the idea of God is fundamental, yet the existence of God is after all a matter of inference, and in a sense God remains a *deus ex machina*, standing outside the systematic unity for which Descartes was in search, for Malebranche, on the other hand, our knowledge of God is direct, is indeed the basis of all knowledge whatsoever. Throughout Malebranche's writings there is evident his sense of our dependence upon God, his intense desire to be in union with God. His whole theory of ideas is profoundly influenced by this attitude and is conceived in a neo-Platonic fashion utterly alien to Descartes' philosophy, in a fashion indeed which has made some writers speak of him as the Christian Plato. At the same time, a deeper examination of his system will, I think, lead us to endorse the view of Professor Adamson and Professor Dawes Hicks that the characteristic features of Malebranche's doctrines are logical and even necessary developments of Cartesian principles. Along various lines of reflection, he tends to consummate the absorption of the finite in the Infinite, which was the logical tendency of Cartesianism. In the first place, the doctrine of occasionalism leads irresistibly to the conclusion that whatever of reality there is in finite activity is a manifestation of the divine activity. In the second place, the doctrine of intelligible extension and the divine immensity

[1] *Traité de Morale*, Ch. II. [2] Cf. *Entretiens*, XII.

renders unnecessary the assumption of the existence of local or material extension, i.e. of finite things. In the third place, the restriction of knowable ideas to corporeal things and the refusal to admit the existence of an idea of the soul are due, as we have seen, to the well-grounded fear that the admission of such ideas as that of the soul would lead to the conclusion that finite minds are but "modes" of the divine mind. Thus, the hypostatisation of the essences would seem to leave both finite minds and finite things in a precarious position. The historical interest of Malebranche's system consists, therefore, in the thorough manner in which it exhibits the latent tendencies of Cartesianism. In many respects he goes beyond Descartes, e.g. in the profound distinction between essence and existence, in the insistence upon the universality and necessity of truth and its independence of the arbitrary will of God. He does not, however, succeed any better than Descartes had done in bringing the parts of his system together into a coherent whole. Whilst in Descartes' system God remains outside the world, in Malebranche's philosophy the world remains outside God, though logically his thought would seem to require that God should be the essence or substance of the world.

In many important respects, especially in his theodicy, Malebranche anticipated Leibniz. The theory of occasionalism as worked out by him does not imply, as Leibniz so frequently urged, and as is sometimes maintained now, a series of miracles at every moment, for God, according to Malebranche, acts in accordance with general volitions, i.e. general laws. The adaptation of movement to ideas, for example, is the result of the laws of the communication of motion and the laws of the conjunction of body and soul, and God, having once laid down these laws, the rest follows as a matter of strict necessity. Thus interpreted, the theory of occasionalism comes very near to Leibniz's own doctrine of pre-established harmony. So much is, indeed, admitted by Leibniz himself. Thus in a letter to De Montmort [1] Leibniz writes, "I do not find that the opinions of Father Malebranche are very far removed from my own. The transition from occasional causes to pre-established harmony does not appear to be very difficult." Malebranche also anticipated Leibniz's views with regard to Providence and

[1] Trois lettres à M. Remond de Montmort, *Opera Philosophica* (Erdmann), p. 704.

with regard to optimism. After the manner of Leibniz he believed that God contemplated a series of possible worlds and chose from amongst them the best possible. After the manner of Leibniz, too, he insisted on the importance of general volitions for explaining many apparent evils as due to the generality of God's "ways." But while Malebranche was compelled, in order to make the finite world worthy of God, to have recourse to theology and the mystery of incarnation, Leibniz avoided the difficulty of reconciling the divine omnipotence and wisdom with the apparent imperfection of the finite world by means of his notion of the infinite perfectibility of the universe. The latter notion does not appear in Malebranche's writings.

It remains to add that the difficulties with regard to the fundamental problems of metaphysics with which Malebranche is confronted recur in a new form in Leibniz's speculation. Leibniz's "possibilities" really correspond to Malebranche's "essences." To effect the transition from essence to existence, Malebranche, as we have seen, has to invoke the aid of the divine will. This is precisely what happens in the handling of the problem by Leibniz. For Leibniz, too, the world of monads is contingent, is "called" into existence by the divine will as distinguished from the divine understanding. Even the principle used by Leibniz in this connection of the "choice of the best" is foreshadowed by Malebranche. Yet what precisely it is that constitutes the mode of transition from the world of possible essences to actual entities neither Leibniz nor Malebranche is able to say. Moreover, the relation that subsists between finite substances and God is left by Leibniz far from clear. Though he was anxious to defend the substantiality and independence of the individual, he speaks of finite monads as "products or fulgurations of the divinity from moment to moment," or as "proceeding from God by a kind of emanation," and in some passages he adopts quite clearly the doctrine of continuous creation. No more than Malebranche was he able to combine within the compass of one system both the independence of individual finite beings and the omnipresence of God.

Similar difficulties come to the front, if we approach the problem from the point of view of the theory of knowledge. Leibniz had occasion more than once to criticise the concep-

tions of Malebranche.[1] Generally it may be said that while Malebranche held that we see all things in God, Leibniz maintained that each monad sees all things in itself. Leibniz will not have it that the ideas which we have are in God, but insists that they merely correspond to the ideas in the mind of God. He admits that external objects cannot be immediately known by us, but, he argues, we know them through modifications in our souls. The disparity between the infinite character of some ideas and the finite character of our modifications does not present any difficulty to him. That which "expresses" something, for example, a figure that expresses a number, need not resemble that which is expressed. He allows, however, that the theory that we see all things in God is true in the sense that whatever is positive in our ideas is ultimately due to the continuous action of God on our minds. Apart from the difficulties occasioned by the notion of the activity of the supreme monad on other monads, it is clear that, if the view be taken seriously, the existence of particulars becomes at once problematical, since God's activity might well be exerted even without them, and, in point of fact, Leibniz frequently asserts that the development of each monad takes place as though only that monad and God existed. Once more, the conception of each monad as mirroring from its own point of view the whole universe required for its presupposition the doctrine of pre-established harmony, and from that doctrine the doctrine of occasionalism, as it emerged from the hands of Malebranche, was at no great remove.

[1] *Entretiens de Philarete et d'Ariste*, Gerhardt, Vol. 6; *Eine Prüfung von Locke's Urtheil über Malebranche, Ibid.*; *Meditationes de Cognitione, veritate et Ideis, Ibid.*, Vol. 4.

DIALOGUES ON METAPHYSICS AND ON RELIGION

FIRST DIALOGUE

The soul and its distinction from the body—The nature of ideas—The world in which our bodies dwell and which we survey is quite different from the world which we see.

THEODORE. Well, my dear Aristes, since you insist, I needs must talk to you of my metaphysical visions. But in order to do so, I must first take leave of this enchanting scene which casts its spell on our senses and by its variety proves too distracting to a mind such as mine. As I am extremely apprehensive lest I should take for the immediate responses of inner truth some of my own prejudices or some of those confused principles which owe their origin to the laws of the conjunction of soul and body, and as in these surroundings I am unable to silence, as you perhaps can, a certain hum which is so disturbing to all my ideas, I suggest that we should go elsewhere. Let us go and shut ourselves up in your study, where we can the more easily pursue our inward meditations and contrive that nothing shall prevent us from both consulting our common master, universal Reason. For it is inner truth that must preside over our conversation. It is truth that must dictate to me what I shall say to you and what you desire to learn with my help. In short, it is to truth that belongs the privilege of judging and deciding our differences. To-day our only object is to philosophise; and, although you are perfectly submissive to the authority of the Church, it is your desire that I should speak to you, in the first place, as if you were unwilling to accept the truths of faith as principles of our knowledge. Faith indeed must guide our mental procedure, but supreme Reason alone is capable of filling our mind with intelligence.

ARISTES. Let us go, Theodore, wherever you will. I am disgusted with all that I see in this material and sensuous world, since I have heard you speak of another world full of intelligible beauty. Lead me to this happy and enchanted region. Make me contemplate all those wonders of which you spoke to me

the other day in a manner so magnificent and with a look of such content. Come, I am ready to follow you into this country which you believe to be so inaccessible to those who listen only to their senses.

THEODORE. You are enjoying yourself, Aristes, and I do not object. You are poking fun at me in a manner so delicate and sincere, that I feel you want to amuse yourself but not to offend me. I forgive you. You are following the hidden inspirations of your ever lively imagination. But, do not mind my telling you, you speak of that which you do not understand. No, I shall not lead you into a strange land; but I shall show you perhaps that you are a stranger in your own land. I shall show you that this world in which you live is not that which you believe it to be, for it is not actually such as you see and feel. You judge by the information furnished by the senses of all the objects of your environment, and your senses mislead you vastly more than you can imagine. They are good witnesses only for matters that concern the body and the maintenance of life. As to all else there is no accuracy nor truth in the information they give us. You will see this, Aristes, without going out of yourself and without my leading you into the fairy region which your imagination pictures for you. Imagination is a fool that likes to play the fool. Its flashes of wit, its unforeseen turns, will amuse you and me also. Yet it is necessary, if you please, that in our discussions reason alone should be supreme. It is necessary that it should decide and pronounce judgment. Indeed, reason is silent and escapes us ever, when imagination comes in the way, and when instead of bidding it be silent we listen to its pleasantries and linger over the various phantoms which it calls up. Bid it be silent, if you wish to hear clearly and distinctly the deliverances of inner truth.

ARISTES. You are taking quite seriously, Theodore, what I have said without much thought. Forgive me for the little liberty I have taken. I assure you that . . .

THEODORE. You have not vexed me, Aristes. You have, on the contrary, delighted me. For, once more, your imagination is so lively and delightful, and I feel so sure of you that you never make me angry and you always please me, so long at least as you poke fun at me only when we are alone; and what I have just told you is meant only to make you realise that you are terribly antagonistic to truth. That quality which

makes you striking in the eyes of men, which wins for you all hearts, which gains for you the esteem of all, which causes all those who know you to be eager for your company, that quality is the most irreconcilable enemy of reason. I am putting before you a paradox the truth of which I cannot at present prove.[1] But you will soon realise its truth from your own experience, and you will perhaps see the reason for it in the course of our talks. To reach this point we have still a long way to traverse. But, believe me, the stupid mind and the gay mind are alike equally barred from truth. There is only this difference between them, that usually the stupid respects it and the gay despises it. Nevertheless, if you are bent on feeding your imagination, you will enter without difficulty into the place where reason issues its deliverances; and when you have listened to reason for some time you will have nothing but contempt for that which up to the present has charmed you, and if God touches your heart you will have nothing but disgust.

ARISTES. Let us go quickly, Theodore. Your promises inspire me with an enthusiasm which I cannot express. Certainly I shall do all that you direct me to do. Let us double our pace. Thank God we have at last reached the place destined for our talks. Let us go in. . . . Be seated. What is there here that can hinder us from entering into ourselves and consulting reason? Do you wish me to shut out all the possible rays of light so that darkness shall cover everything in the room that is visible and that can affect our senses?

THEODORE. No, my friend. Darkness affects our senses just as much as light. It removes the lustre of colours. But at the present hour it might cause some uneasiness and fear in our imaginations. Draw the curtain. This bright light will inconvenience us a little and perhaps give too much lustre to certain objects. That is all right. Be seated. Reject, Aristes, all that has come into your mind by means of the senses. Silence your imagination. Let all things in you be in perfect silence. Forget also, if you can, that you have a body, and think only of what I am going to tell you. In a word, be attentive, and do not find fault with my preamble. Your attention is all I ask of you. Without this effort or this struggle of the mind against the impressions of sense, we can make no conquest in the realm of truth.

[1] *Traité de morale*, Ch. XII.

ARISTES. I believe so, too, Theodore. Speak, but permit me to stop you when I cannot follow you.

THEODORE. That is quite right. Listen.

I. Nothing or Non-being has no qualities. I think, therefore I am.[1] But what am I, I that think during the time that I am thinking? Am I a body, a mind, a man? As yet I know nothing of all this. I know only that during the time in which I think I am something that thinks. Now let us see. Can a body think? Can a piece of extension whether of length, width or depth, reason, desire, feel? No, beyond a doubt, for all the modifications of such an extension consist only in certain relations of distance; and it is obvious that such relations are not perceptions, reasonings, pleasures, desires, feelings, in a word, thoughts. This "I" that thinks, then, my own substance, is not a body, since my perceptions, which certainly belong to me, are entirely different things from these relations of distance.

ARISTES. It is clear to me that modifications of extension can only be relations of distance, and that, therefore, extension cannot know, will or feel. But perhaps my body is something else besides extension. For, it seems to me, it is my finger that feels the pain of a prick, my heart which desires, my brain which reasons. The inner feeling I have of all that goes on within me teaches me what I am saying to you. Prove to me that my body is nothing but extension, and I will admit that my mind, or that in me which thinks, wills and reasons, is not material or corporeal.

II. THEODORE. What, Aristes! Do you believe that your body consists of some substance other than extension? Do you not understand that it suffices alone to have extension to form out of it a brain, a heart, arms, hands, all the veins, the arteries, the nerves, and whatever else the body is composed of? If God were to destroy the extension of your body would you still have a brain, veins, arteries, etc.? Do you believe, then, that a body can be reduced to a mathematical point? That God can form all that there is in the universe out of the extension of a grain of sand, I do not doubt. But, assuredly, when there is no extension (I say *no* extension), there is no corporeal substance. Think it over seriously, and in order to become convinced of it, pay attention to this.

[1] St. Augustine, *City of God*, Bk. XI, Ch. XXVI.

All that is or has being can either be conceived by itself, or it cannot. There is no middle course, for these two propositions are contradictories. Now, all that can be conceived by itself and without the thought of anything else, all, I say, that can be conceived by itself as existing independently of every other thing, and without the idea which we have of it representing any other thing, is assuredly a being or a substance, and all that cannot be conceived by itself and without the thought of anything else is a mode of Being or a modification of Substance.

For example. We cannot think of roundness without thinking of extension. Roundness, then, is not a being or substance, but a mode of being. We can think of extension without thinking of any other thing in particular. Therefore, extension is not a mode of being. It is itself a being. Since the modification of a substance is only the substance itself determined in a particular way, it is evident that the idea of a modification necessarily involves the idea of the substance of which it is a modification. Again, since a substance is that which subsists by itself, the idea of a substance does not necessarily involve the idea of any other being. We have no other way of distinguishing substances or beings, modifications or modes of being, than by the different ways in which we think of them. Now, consider. Is it not true that you can think of extension without thinking of any other thing? Is it not true that you can become aware of extension by itself? Extension, therefore, is a substance and not a mode of substance. Accordingly, extension and matter are one and the same substance. But I can think of thought, desires, pleasures, without thinking of extension, and even if I suppose that there is no extension. Hence all these are not modes of extension, but modes of a substance which thinks, which feels, which desires, and which is quite different from extension.

All the modifications of extension consist in nothing but relations of distance. But it is evident that my pleasures, my desires, my thoughts, are not relations of distance. All relations of distance can be compared, measured, determined, in an exact manner by the principles of geometry, but we cannot compare or measure our perceptions or our feelings in this way. Therefore, my soul is not material. It is not a modification of my body. It is a substance which thinks and which has no resemblance to the extended substance of which my body is made up.

ARISTES. That seems to me demonstrated. But what conclusions can you draw from it?

III. THEODORE. I can deduce an infinite number of truths from it. For the distinction of body and soul is the basis of the main tenets of philosophy, and among others of the immortality of the soul.[1] For, let me say this in passing, if the soul is a substance distinguished from the body, it is clear that, even if death were to annihilate our body (which it does not do), it would not follow from that that our soul was also annihilated. But it is not yet time to deal in a thorough manner with this important question. It is necessary that I should first prove to you many other truths. Try to be attentive to what I am going to tell you.

ARISTES. Proceed. I shall follow you with all the application of which I am capable.

IV. THEODORE. I think of a quantity of things, of a number, a circle, a house, of such and such beings, of Being. Therefore, all these *are* at least during the time in which I am thinking of them. Surely, when I think of a circle, of a number, of Being or the Infinite, of a certain finite being, I am aware of these realities. For if the circle of which I am aware were nothing, in thinking of it I should be thinking of nothing. But the circle of which I am thinking has properties which no other figure has. Hence this circle exists during the time in which I am thinking of it, since nothing or non-entity has no properties, and one non-entity cannot be different from any other non-entity.

ARISTES. What, Theodore! Do you mean to say that whatever you may choose to think of exists? Does your mind give being to this cabinet, this bureau, this chair, because you think of them?

THEODORE. Not so fast. I am saying that all that I think of *is* or, if you like, exists. The cabinet, the bureau, these chairs which I see, all these *are* at least during the time in which I see them. But you are mixing up what I see with a piece of furniture that I do not see. There is a greater difference between the bureau that I see and that which you believe you see than there is between your mind and your body.

ARISTES. I understand you partly, Theodore, and I am sorry for having interrupted you. I am convinced that all

[1] See *Recherche*, Bk. IV, Ch. II.

that we see, and all that we think of, has some reality. You are not talking of objects, but of the ideas of objects. Yes, no doubt, the ideas which we have of objects exist during the time in which they are present to the mind. But I thought you were speaking of the objects themselves.

V. THEODORE. *Of the objects themselves,* why, we have not got to them! I am trying to think the matter out in the proper order. Many more principles than you may suppose are necessary to prove what no one doubts. For where are the people who doubt whether they have bodies, whether they are walking on this earth, whether they are living in a material world? But you will know soon what few people understand well, namely, that if our body moves about in a corporeal world, our mind, on the other hand, transports us incessantly into a world of intelligence which touches it, and which thereby becomes accessible to the senses. Since men attach no value to the ideas which they have of things, they give to the created world more reality than it has. They do not doubt the existence of objects, and they attribute to them many qualities which they have not. Yet they do not think of the reality of their ideas. This is so because they listen to their senses and do not consult inner truth. For, once again, it is much easier to prove the reality of ideas or, if I may use your terms, the reality of this other world filled with the beauties of intelligence than to prove the existence of the material world. My reasons are as follows. Ideas have an eternal and necessary existence, but the corporeal world exists only because it has pleased God to create it. So, in order to see the intelligible world, it is sufficient to consult reason which contains the ideas, or the eternal and necessary intelligible essences, and this can be accomplished by all minds that are rational or are united to the infinite Reason. But in order to see the material world, or rather to judge that this world exists, since that world is invisible in itself, it is necessary that God should reveal it to us, for we cannot see His arbitrary volitions in the necessary Reason. Now God reveals the existence of His creations in two ways, by the authority of the sacred writings and by means of the senses.

Given the first authority (and we cannot reject it), we can give a strict demonstration of the existence of objects.[1] By means of the second we can get sufficient assurance of the existence of particular bodies. Yet this second authority is by

[1] Dialogue VI.

no means infallible. For one person believes he sees before him his enemy when the latter is very far away from him. Another believes that he has four paws, whereas he really has two legs. Another again feels pain in an arm which had been amputated long ago. Thus the natural revelation which comes about in consequence of the general laws of the conjunction of soul and body is at present subject to error. I will tell you the reason later.[1] But *the* Revelation can never lead directly to error, for God cannot wish to deceive us. I have digressed a little in order to give you an idea of some truths which I will prove in the sequel, so as to arouse your curiosity and revive your attention. I return to the subject. Listen. I think of a number, of a circle, of a room, of chairs, in a word, of certain particular beings. I think also of Being or the Infinite, or of Indeterminate Being. All these ideas have some reality while I think of them. You cannot doubt this, since nothing or non-being has no properties, and they have. For they enlighten the mind and make themselves known to it. Some of them even strike the mind and make themselves felt or sensed, and that in a thousand different ways. At least it is certain that the properties of some differ greatly from those of others. If, then, our ideas are veritably real, and still more, if their reality is necessary, eternal and immutable, it is clear that we are both of us carried into another world than that in which our bodies dwell. We find ourselves in a world all filled with intelligible beauties.

Let us suppose, Aristes, that God destroyed all the beings which He has created, except you and me, or your body and mine. (I speak to you as to a man who already knows and believes several things, and I am certain that in this I am not mistaken. I should weary you were I to speak with scrupulous care and in the manner appropriate to a man who yet knows nothing at all.) Let us suppose, too, that God imprinted upon your brain the same traces, or rather produced in your mind the same ideas, which we take to be present now. This being granted, in which world, Aristes, should we be passing the day? Would it not be an intelligible world? Now, note this, it is in this world that we are and that we live, though the body which we animate lives in another world and moves about in another world. It is this world which we contemplate, admire, feel. Yet the world which we pay regard to and which we concern ourselves with when we turn our heads in all directions, is nothing but matter which is invisible

[1] Cf. Dialogues IV and VI.

in itself, and which has none of those beauties which we admire, and which we feel when we are mindful of it. For, consider this carefully, nothing or non-being has no properties. If, therefore, the world were destroyed, it would have no beauty. But, supposing that the world were annihilated, and that God nevertheless produced in our brains the same traces, or rather in our minds the same ideas, which are produced in them on the presence of objects, we should still see the same beauty. Hence the beauties that we see are not material beauties, but beauties of intelligence rendered perceptible in consequence of the conjunction of soul and body, for the supposed annihilation of matter does not carry with it the annihilation of the beauties which we see.

ARISTES. I am afraid, Theodore, that you are supposing what is not true. For if God destroyed this room, certainly it would no longer be visible, for non-being has no properties.

VI. THEODORE. You do not follow me, Aristes. Your room is in itself absolutely invisible. If God had destroyed it, you say, it would no longer be visible, since non-being has no properties. That would be true, if the visibility of your room were a property which belonged to it. If it were destroyed, it would no longer be visible. Granted; since in a sense that is true. But that which I see in having regard to your room, I mean in turning my eyes in all directions so as to consider it, will always be visible even if your room should be destroyed, nay, even if it had never been built. I submit to you, that a Chinaman who had never been here could see in his own country all that I see when I pay regard to your room, provided we suppose, what is by no means impossible, that his brain has been affected in the same manner as mine has been when I concern myself with it. Do not persons in a violent fever, or when asleep, see chimeras of all kinds which never had existence? What they see *is* at least while they see it. Yet what they believe they see is not. That to which they refer what they have seen is nothing real.

I repeat, Aristes, strictly speaking, your room is not visible. It is not properly your room that I see when I pay regard to it, since I could see all that I see now, even if God had destroyed it. The dimensions which I see are immutable, eternal, necessary. These intelligible dimensions which I see occupy no space. The dimensions of your room, on the contrary, are changeable and corruptible: they do fill a certain space. But in telling you

too many truths I am afraid I am only so far multiplying your difficulties. For you seem to me to find it difficult to distinguish the ideas which are alone visible by themselves from the objects which they represent, which are not visible to the mind, since they cannot act on it or be represented to it.

ARISTES. It is true I am a little confused. The reason is that I have some difficulty in following you in this land of ideas to which you attribute a veritable reality. I can get no hold over anything that has no body. And this reality of your ideas, which I cannot but believe is a veritable reality, for the reasons that you have just given me, appears to me to have but little solidity. For, I ask you, what becomes of our ideas when we no longer think of them? To me it seems that they retire into non-being. And if that is the case, your intelligible world is destroyed. If, on closing my eyes, I destroy the intelligible room which I see now, then the room has but a poor reality. If it is sufficient for me to open my eyes in order to create an intelligible world, then surely this world is not of as much value as the one in which our bodies dwell.

VII. THEODORE. That is true, Aristes. If it is you who give being to your ideas, if only a wink of the eye is necessary to annihilate them, then their reality is but a poor thing. Yet if they are eternal, immutable, necessary, in a word divine (I mean the intelligible reality out of which they are formed), assuredly they are more important than this unavailing matter which is in itself invisible. What, Aristes! Can you possibly believe, then, that in resolving to think of a circle, for example, you are giving being to the substance, so to speak, of which your idea is formed, and that as soon as you decide to cease thinking of it you are annihilating it? Be careful. If it is you who give being to your ideas, you do so by willing to think of them. But, now, how can you will to think of a circle, if you have as yet no idea of it and out of which to form and complete it? Can you will anything without knowing it? Could you make something out of nothing? Certainly, you cannot will to think of a circle if you have as yet no idea of it, or at least of extension, of certain parts of which you could think without thinking of others. You cannot will to see it closely, distinctly, if you have not yet seen it confusedly and from a distance. Your attention brings you near to it, causes it to be present to you, even forms it. Granted. Still

it is clear that it does not produce it out of nothing. Your inattention takes you away from it, but it does not absolutely annihilate it. For if it did, how could you form the desire to produce it, and according to what model would you make it anew, so similar to itself? Is it not clear that this would be impossible?

ARISTES. Not too clear as yet to me, Theodore. You have convinced me, but yet you have not quite carried me with you. This earth is real, I feel it. If I strike it with my foot, it resists. There is something solid here. But that my ideas have a reality independently of my thought, that they have being even when I do not think them, that is something I cannot persuade myself into believing.

VIII. THEODORE. You cannot do so because you cannot retire into yourself in order to consult Reason, and because fatigued with the work of attending, you are listening to your imagination and your senses, which speak to you without your having the trouble to consult them. You have not thought sufficiently over the proofs which I have given to show you that their testimony is deceptive.

Some time ago there was a man, otherwise quite sensible, who believed that he was always surrounded by water up to his waist, and was always in fear lest it should increase and drown him. He felt it just as you feel your earth. He found it cold, and always walked very slowly because, he said, the water prevented him from walking more quickly. When he was spoken to and he listened, he was persuaded of the falsity of his belief. But he soon fell again into his error. When a man believes himself transformed into a cock, a hare, a wolf, or an ox like Nebuchadnezzar, he feels instead of his feet the feet of a cock, instead of arms he feels the legs of an ox, and instead of hair a tuft or horns. How is it that you do not see that the resistance which you feel when you press the floor with your foot is only a feeling which strikes the soul, and that, strictly speaking, we can have all our feelings independently of objects? Have you never during sleep felt a heavy weight on the breast which prevented you from breathing, have you never believed you were struck or even wounded or that you were striking others, or walking or dancing or jumping on solid earth?

You believe this floor exists because you feel it offers

resistance. What then? Has the air less reality than your floor because it has less solidity? Has ice more reality than water because it is harder? But you are mistaken. Nothing can resist a mind. This floor resists your foot. Granted. Yet it is something entirely different from your floor or your body which resists your mind or which gives it the *feeling* that you have of resistance or solidity.

Nevertheless, I will grant even that your floor resists you. But do you think that your ideas do not resist you? Find, then, in a circle two diameters which are not equal or in an ellipse three which are. Find the square root of 8 or the cube root of 9. Cause that it should be just to do to others what we do not wish to be done to ourselves, or to take an example which comes nearer to your own case, two feet of intelligible extension to equal only one. Surely the nature of intelligible extension would not allow this. It offers resistance to your mind. Do not, then, doubt its reality. Your floor is impenetrable to your foot. That your senses teach you in a confused and misleading manner. Intelligible extension is also impenetrable in its own way, a fact which it makes you see clearly through its self-evidence and by its own light.

Listen, Aristes. You have an idea of space or extension, of space, that is, which has no limits. This idea is necessary, eternal, immutable, common to all minds, common to men, angels and God Himself. This idea, you must remember, is ineffacable from your mind, as is also the idea of Being or of the Infinite or indeterminate Being. It is always present to the mind. You cannot sever yourself from it or lose it entirely from view. And it is from this vast idea that we get not only the idea of a circle and of all intelligible figures, but also those of the sensible figures which we see in surveying the created world. We do all this according to the different applications of the intelligible parts of this ideal immaterial extension intelligible to our mind, now as a result of our attention, in which case we know these figures, now as a result of tracings in and affections of our brain, in which case we imagine or feel them. I need not explain all this to you at present in greater detail. Only remember that it is necessary that this idea of an infinite extension should have a good deal of reality, since you cannot comprehend it, and since, however much you exercise your mind, you cannot exhaust it. Consider

how impossible it is that it should be a modification, seeing that the Infinite cannot be actually a modification of something that is finite. Say to yourself: My mind cannot comprehend this vast idea. It cannot measure it. The idea, then, surpasses the mind infinitely, and if it surpasses it, it is clear that it cannot be a modification of it. For the modifications of any beings cannot extend beyond those beings, since the modifications of beings are only those very beings determined in such and such a way. My mind cannot measure this idea because it is finite and the idea is infinite. For the finite, however big it may be, be it applied or repeated as many times as you like, can never equal infinity.

ARISTES. How subtle and quick you are. Gently, if you please. I deny that the mind is aware of the Infinite. The mind, I grant, is aware of an extension, whose limit we cannot see, but it does not see an infinite extension; a finite mind cannot see the Infinite.

IX. THEODORE. No, Aristes. The mind does not see an infinite extension in the sense that its thought or perception can equal an infinite extension. If that were the case, it would comprehend or include it and would be infinite itself. For an infinite thought is necessary to measure an infinite idea, if it is to be actually united with all that is comprehended in the Infinite. But the mind actually sees that its immediate object is infinite, it actually sees that intelligible extension is infinite. And this is the case, not as you believe, because it cannot see its end; for if that were so it might hope to find it, or at least it could doubt whether or not it had an end; but rather because it sees clearly that it has none.

Let us suppose that a man fallen from the clouds is walking the earth, keeping always in a straight line,—I mean on one of those big circles into which the geographers divide it,—and that he meets with no obstacles on the way. Could he decide after some days' journey that the earth was infinite because he had not found its end? If he were a wise man and cautious in his judgments he would believe it very large, but he would not think it infinite. And if, by dint of walking, he found he had returned to the same place as he started from, he would realise that he had actually been round it. But when the mind thinks of intelligible extension, when it wishes to measure the idea of space, it sees

clearly that extension is infinite. It cannot doubt the inexhaustible character of this idea.

Were the mind to take as much of it as is necessary for representing to itself the space of a hundred thousand worlds and at every moment a hundred thousand more, the idea would never cease to supply it with all that was wanted. The mind sees it and cannot doubt it. But it is not through this that it realises it is infinite. It is rather because it actually sees it to be infinite that the mind knows that it cannot exhaust it.

Geometricians are the most exact of all those who are engaged in reasoning. But all agree that there is no fraction which, multiplied by itself, would give a product of 8, although by increasing the terms of the fraction we can get as close an approximation as we wish to this number. All agree that a hyperbole and its asymptotes and many other similar lines produced to infinity approach one another, without ever meeting. Do you think they discover these truths by groping in the dark, and that they judge of what they cannot see by some little thing which they have discovered? No, Aristes, imagination and the senses, or they who follow their testimony, proceed in this manner. True philosophers judge precisely of nothing but what they see. And yet they are not afraid of asserting, without actual experience, that no part of the diagonal of a square, be it a million times smaller than the smallest grain of sand, can equal exactly, and without leaving a remainder, this diagonal of a square and either of its sides. So also it is true that the mind can see the infinite in the small as well as in the great; not by division or repeated multiplication of its finite ideas which could never reach the infinite, but by the infinity itself which it discovers in its ideas and which belongs to them. These ideas teach it that on the one hand there is no unity, and on the other that there are no limits, in intelligible extension.

ARISTES. I yield, Theodore. Ideas have more reality than I thought, and their reality is immutable, necessary, eternal, common to all intelligences, and never modifications of their own being, which being finite cannot have modes which are infinite. The perception which I have of intelligible extension belongs to me; it is a modification of my mind. It is I who perceive this extension. But the extension which I perceive is not itself a modification of my mind. For I am quite sure that it is not myself which I see when I think of infinite spaces, of a circle,

a square, a cube, when I survey this room, and when I turn my eyes towards the sky. The perception of extension is *mine*. But this extension, and all the figures which I discover therein, in a way which I should very much like to know, are not mine. The perception which I have of extension cannot take place without me. It must, therefore, be a modification of my mind. But the extension which I see subsists without me, since you can contemplate it, without my having to think of it, you and all other men.

X. THEODORE. You can add without any fear, "and God Himself." For all our clear ideas are in God so far as their intelligible reality is concerned. It is in God alone that we see them; in the universal Reason alone which illumines all intelligences. If our ideas are eternal, immutable, necessary, you can easily see that they can have being only in a nature which is immutable. Yes, Aristes. God sees in Himself the intelligible extension, the archetype of the matter out of which the world is formed and in which our bodies dwell, and more than this, it is only in Him that we see it. For our minds have their being only in the universal Reason, only in that intelligible substance which contains in itself all the ideas of all the truths which we discover,[1] whether in consequence of the general laws which govern the union of our mind with the universal Reason, or in consequence of the general law of the conjunction of our soul with our body, of which conjunction the occasional or natural cause consists in the impressions which are made on the brain by the action of objects or by the flow of the animal spirits.

The order of exposition does not allow me at present to explain all this in detail. But in order to satisfy in part your desire to know how the mind can discover all kinds of figures and come to see this sensible world in the intelligible extension, note that you can know a circle, for example, in three ways. You may conceive it, you may imagine it, you may feel or see it. When you conceive it, what happens is that intelligible extension applies itself to your mind with limits which are indeterminate as far as their length is concerned, but which are equally distant from a fixed point, and all in the same plane; and then you have a conception of a circle in general. When you imagine it, what happens is that a determinate part of this extension, the limits of which are

[1] Cf. Dialogue XII.

equally distant from a point, touches your mind lightly. Finally, when you feel or see it, what happens is that a determinate part of this extension touches your soul in sensuous fashion and modifies it by a feeling of some colour. For intelligible extension becomes visible, and can represent a particular body, only by means of colour, since it is only by the differences in colour that we can judge of the differences among the objects that we see. All the intelligible parts of this intelligible extension are as ideas the same in kind, just as all the parts of local or material extension are of the same nature viewed as substances. But the sensations of colour being essentially different, we are enabled by means of them to distinguish a variety of bodies. If I distinguish your hand from your coat and both from the air which surrounds them, I do so because the sensations which I have of them, whether of colour or light, are very different. That is evident, for if I had the same sensation of colour, in reference to all the objects in your room, I should not become aware, by means of the sense of sight, of any diversity of objects. Thus, you can see that intelligible extension applied in different ways to our mind can give us the ideas which we have of mathematical figures as well as of all the objects which we admire in the universe, and finally of all that our imagination presents to us.[1] Just as one can with the aid of a chisel make all sorts of figures in a slab of marble, so God can present to us all material things by means of diverse applications of intelligible extension to our minds. How this is done, and why God does it, we shall inquire in the sequel.

This will be sufficient, Aristes, for our first talk. Try to get accustomed to metaphysical ideas and to raise yourself above your senses. Here you are, unless I am mistaken, transported into an intelligible world. Contemplate its beauties. Review in your mind all that I have just said. Partake of the substance of truth and prepare to enter further into the unknown land, which you have only just approached. To-morrow I shall attempt to conduct you to the throne of the sovereign Majesty to whom belongs from all eternity this glorious and unchangeable world wherein our minds dwell.

ARISTES. I am still staggered and dumbfounded. My

[1] Cf. *Recherche*, Bk. III, Pt. II, and the further explanation in the *Éclaircissement*. See also my *Réponse au livre des vraies et des fausses Idées* of M. Arnauld and my *First Letter* in reply to his defence.

body weighs my mind down and I have difficulty in keeping a firm hold upon the truths which you have revealed to me, and yet you say you will take me still higher. I shall be quite giddy, Theodore, and if I feel to-morrow as I do to-day, I shall not have enough confidence to follow you.

THEODORE. Meditate, Aristes, on what I have just told you, and to-morrow, I promise you, you will be ready for everything. Meditation will strengthen your mind and will give you enthusiasm and endow you with wings wherewith to soar beyond merely created things and ascend to the very presence of the Creator. Adieu, my friend. Be of good courage.

ARISTES. Adieu, Theodore, I shall do all that you have just directed me to do.

SECOND DIALOGUE

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

We see all things in God, and nothing finite is capable of representing Him—Thus it is sufficient to think of Him to know that He exists.

THEODORE. Well, Aristes, what do you think of that intelligible world into which I led you yesterday? Does it still startle your imagination? Does your mind advance firmly and steadily in the land of meditative spirits, in this region inaccessible to those who listen only to their senses?

ARISTES. What a beautiful spectacle is this archetype of the universe, Theodore! I have been contemplating it with much satisfaction. What an agreeable surprise it is for the soul to find itself without suffering death transported into this land of truth, where it discovers an abundance of nourishment. I am not yet, it is true, accustomed to this celestial manna, to this nourishment which is all spiritual. At certain moments it seems quite hollow and slight. But when I partake of it with proper attention I find so much savour and solidity therein that I can no longer think of feeding with the brutes in a material world.

THEODORE. Oh, my dear Aristes, what are you telling me? Are you speaking seriously?

ARISTES. Quite seriously. I wish no longer to listen to my senses. I wish always to enter into the innermost core of my being and to live on the abundance which I find there. My senses are adapted for leading my body to the ordinary pastures. I am willing that it should follow them. But that I should follow them, I myself! That I shall never do again. I wish to follow Reason alone, and to step by the aid of my attention into the land of truth, where I may find delicious repasts, repasts which alone are fit nourishment for intelligent beings.

THEODORE. You have, then, surely forgotten that you have a body. But you will not be long without thinking of it, or rather

without thinking with reference to it. This body which you neglect now will force you soon to obtain food for it and to occupy yourself with its wants. For as yet the mind cannot free itself so readily from matter. Yet now that your mind is firm, tell me, pray, what you have discovered in this land of ideas. Do you understand, now, what this Reason is, of which we speak in the material and terrestrial world and of which we know so little? I promised you yesterday to lead you beyond all created things to the very presence of the Creator. Have you not flown there by yourself and without thinking of Theodore?

I. ARISTES. I confess I did think that, without lacking in the respect which I owe to you, I could go myself along the road which you had shown me. I have followed it, and I have, it seems to me, recognised clearly what you told me yesterday, namely, that the universal Reason is eternal and that it has its being in God alone. I will indicate the steps of the argument in a few words. Judge, then, and tell me if I have gone astray.

After you left me I remained for some time in hesitation and suspense. But, driven by a secret enthusiasm, I seemed to be saying to myself, I do not know how: "Reason belongs to me in common with Theodore; why then can I not consult it and follow it?" and it has led me, unless I am mistaken, up to Him who possesses it as His own, and by the necessity of His being; for it seems to lead there quite naturally. Here, then, is the argument in simple and non-figurative language:

Infinite intelligible extension is not a modification of my mind. It is immutable, eternal, necessary. I cannot doubt its reality or immensity. But nothing that is immutable, eternal, necessary, and, above all, infinite is a created thing, nor can it belong to a created thing. Hence it belongs to the Creator and can be only in God. Hence there is a God, and a Reason, a God in whom there is the archetype which I contemplate of the created world which I inhabit—a God in whom there is that Reason which illumines me by means of the purely intellectual ideas which it furnishes in abundance to my mind and to the minds of all men. For I am sure that all men are united with the same Reason as I am, and since I am certain that they see or can see what I see when I enter into myself and when I discover therein the truth or necessary relations which are contained in the intelligible substance of the universal

Reason which dwells in me, or rather in which all intelligences dwell.

II. THEODORE. You have not been led astray, my dear Aristes. You have followed reason, and it has led you to Him who engendered it out of His own substance and who possesses it throughout all eternity. But do not imagine that it has disclosed to you the nature of that supreme Being to whom it has led you. When you contemplate intelligible extension you only see as yet the archetype of the material world which we inhabit and that of an infinity of other possible worlds. You do in truth see the divine Substance, for it alone is visible, it alone can illumine the mind. Yet you do not see it in itself or as it really is. You only see it in its relation to material creations, you only see it so far as they participate in it, or in so far as it is representative of them. Consequently it is not, strictly speaking, God Himself that you see, but only the matter which He can produce.

You certainly see, by means of the infinite intelligible extension, *that* God is. For He alone can possess all that you see, since nothing finite can contain an infinite reality. But you do not see *what* God is. For there is no limit to the Divine perfections, and that which you see when you think of immense spaces is lacking in an infinity of perfections. I say "that which you see," not the substance which represents to you what you see For this substance, which you do not see in itself, has infinite perfections.

Assuredly, the substance which contains this intelligible extension is all-powerful. It is infinitely wise. It includes an infinity of perfections and realities. It includes, for example, an infinity of intelligible numbers. But the intelligible extension has nothing in common with all these things. There is no wisdom, power or unity in all this extension which you contemplate. For you know that all numbers are commensurable among themselves, since they have unity for a common measure. If, then, the parts of extension divided and subdivided by the mind can be reduced to unity, they will always be commensurable amongst themselves by this unity, which as you know is certainly not the case. Thus the divine Substance in that simplicity to which we cannot attain contains an infinity of quite different intelligible perfections by means of which God illumines us without

allowing Himself to be seen as He is, or in His individual and absolute reality, but merely in His reality which is general and relative to possible created beings. Nevertheless, try to follow me. I will try to lead you as near as possible to the Divine.

III. The infinite intelligible extension is only the archetype of an infinity of possible worlds similar to our own. By means of it I only see certain determinate beings—material things. When I think of this extension I do not see the divine Substance, except in so far as it is representative of bodies and is participated in by them. But now, when I think of Being, and not of determinate beings, when I think of *the* Infinite, and not of such and such an infinite, it is certain, in the first place, that I do not see such a vast reality in the modifications of my mind. For if I cannot find in these modifications sufficient reality to enable me to represent to myself an infinity in extension, a fortiori I cannot find in it sufficient reality for representing to myself what is infinite in every way. Thus, it is only God, the Infinite, the Unlimited, it is only the Infinite infinitely infinite who can comprise the infinitely infinite reality which I see when I think of Being, and not of such and such beings or of such and such infinities.

IV. In the second place, it is certain that the idea of Being, of reality, of unlimited perfection, or of the infinite in every way, is not the divine substance in so far as it is representative of such and such a created thing or is participated in by such and such a created thing. For every created thing is necessarily a definite being. It is a contradiction that God should make or create a Being in general or one Infinite in every way which should not be God Himself, or should not be equal to His own principle. The Son or the Holy Spirit do not merely share in the divine Being. They receive Him in His entirety, or, to speak of things more within the reach of our minds, it is clear that our idea of a circle in general is only the idea of intelligible extension in so far as it represents a certain circle or is shared in by a certain circle. For the idea of a circle in general, or of the essence of a circle, represents infinite circles, is adapted to infinite circles. This idea comprises the idea of the infinite. For to think of a circle in general is to think of an infinite number of circles as a single circle. I do not know whether you follow what I wish to make you understand. Here it is in two words. The idea

of Being without restrictions, of the infinite, of the general, is not the idea of created things, or of the essences of created things, but the idea which represents the Divine or the essence of the Divine. All particular beings participate in Being, but no particular being can equal it. Being comprises all things, but all beings created or possible, in all their manifold variety, cannot exhaust the immense extension of Being.

ARISTES. It seems to me, I can see your meaning. You define God as He defined Himself in speaking to Moses, "God is that which is." [1] Intelligible extension is the idea or archetype of bodies. But the being without restrictions, in a word, Being, is the idea of God; it is that which represents Him to our minds as we see Him in this life.

V. THEODORE. Very good. But above all you must note that God or the Infinite is not visible by an idea representative of Him. The Infinite is its own idea. It has no Archetype. It can be known, but it cannot be constructed. Only created things, only determinate beings, can be constructed, or can be visible through ideas which represent them even before they are produced. We can see a circle, a house, a sun, though they may not actually exist. For all that is finite can be seen in the Infinite, which comprises all intelligible ideas of the finite. The Infinite, on the other hand, can be seen only in itself, for nothing finite can represent the Infinite. If we think of God, it follows that He exists. A finite being, though known, may not exist. We can see its essence without its existence, its idea without itself. But we cannot see the essence of the Infinite without its existence, or the idea of Being without Being. For Being can have no idea representative of it. There is no archetype which could comprise all its intelligible reality. The Infinite is its own archetype, and contains within itself the archetype of all beings.

Thus, you see that the proposition, "there is a God," is in itself the clearest of all existential propositions, and that it is even as certain as the proposition, "I think, therefore I am." You see, moreover, what is meant by God, for God, Being, and the Infinite, are one and the same.

VI. But, once more, make no mistake about this matter. You see only confusedly and as from a distance what God is. You do not see Him as He is, because, though you see the Infinite

[1] Exod. iii. 14.

or Being without restriction, you only see it in a very imperfect manner. You do not see it as a single being. You see a multiplicity of created things in the infinity of uncreated Being, but you do not see its unity distinctly. For you cannot see it so much in its absolute reality as in the reality which attaches to it in its relation to possible created things, the number of which it could increase indefinitely without their ever equalling the reality which represents them. You see it as the universal Reason which illumines all intelligences according to the measure of light necessary for their guidance, and for revealing as much of His perfections as can be shared in by limited beings. But you do not discover the property which is essential to the Infinite, that, namely, of being at the same time one and many, composed, so to speak, of an infinity of different perfections, and yet so simple that in it each perfection comprises all the others without any real distinction.[1]

God does not communicate His substance to any of His creatures; He only communicates to them His perfections; not as they are in His substance, but in so far as His substance is representative of them, and in accordance with the limitations bound up with the nature of created things. Intelligible extension, for instance, represents bodies; it is their archetype or their idea. But, although this extension occupies no place, bodies are and must be locally extended because of the limitations essential to all finite created things, and because no finite created thing can have this property or character, incomprehensible to the human mind, of being at the same time one thing and all things, of being at the same time perfectly simple and yet in possession of all sorts of perfections.

Thus, intelligible extension represents infinite spaces, but it does not fill any; and although it fills, so to speak, all minds and discloses itself to them, it follows in no way that our mind is spatial. If our mind could only see infinite spaces through local conjunction with locally extended spaces, then, in order to see infinite spaces, it would itself have to be infinitely extended.[2]

The divine Substance is everywhere, without being extended locally. It has no limits. It is not contained in the universe. But it is not this Substance as expanded everywhere that we see when we think of spaces. For were this the case our mind,

[1] Cf. *Première lettre touchant la Défense de M. Arnauld*, Note 18.
[2] *Ibid.*, second and eleven following notes.

being finite, would never be able to think of infinite spaces.[1] Yet the intelligible extension, which we see in the divine Substance which comprises it, is this Substance only in so far as it is representative of material beings and participated in by them. This is all I can tell you. But observe, that this Being without restriction, or the Infinite in every way which we think of, is not merely the divine Substance in so far as it is representative of all possible beings; for, though we have no detailed ideas of all these beings, we are yet assured that they cannot equal or exhaust the intelligible reality of the Infinite. In a sense, then, it is the divine Substance of God that we see. But in this life we only see it in a way so confused and distant, that we see rather *that* it is than *what* it is; we see rather that it is the source and archetype of all being than its own nature or its perfections in themselves.

ARISTES. Is there not a contradiction in what you are saying? If nothing finite can have enough reality to represent the Infinite (and this appears evident), does it not necessarily follow that we see the divine Substance in itself?

VII. THEODORE. I do not deny that we see the divine Substance in itself. We see it in itself in this sense that we do not see it through any finite thing representing it. But we do *not* see it in itself in the sense that we can reach its simplicity or discover its perfections.

Since you agree that nothing finite can represent the Infinite, it is clear that if you see the Infinite you can only see it in itself. But it is certain that you do see it; for otherwise when you ask me whether there is a God or an Infinite Being, you would be asking a ridiculous question, by means of a proposition the terms of which you do not understand. It would be just as if you were to ask me whether there is a Blictri,[2] that is to say, a particular thing without knowing what thing.

Assuredly, all men have the idea of God or are thinking of the Infinite when they ask whether He exists. But they believe they could think of Him though He did not really exist, for they do not realise that nothing finite can represent Him. As they can think of several things which do not exist because created things can be seen though they do not exist, since they are not seen in themselves, but in the ideas which represent them, they imagine

[1] *Ibid.*, and Dialogue VIII. [2] A nonsense word.

that it is the same in the case of the Infinite, and that He could be thought of though He does not exist. This is the reason which makes them seek, without recognising Him whom they encounter at all moments, and whom they would recognise soon enough if they entered into themselves and reflected on their ideas.

ARISTES. You convince me, Theodore, but there still remains some doubt. It seems to me that the idea which I have of Being in general or of the Infinite is an idea of my own workmanship. It seems to me that the mind can make general ideas out of several particular ideas. When one has seen several trees, an apple-tree, a pear-tree, a plum-tree, etc., one gets the general idea of a tree. In the same way, when one has seen several beings, one forms the general idea of Being. Hence this general idea of Being is only a confused assemblage of all the others. Thus I have been taught and thus I have always understood the matter.

VIII. THEODORE. Your mind, Aristes, is a marvellous worker. It can extract the Infinite from the finite, the idea of Being without restriction from the ideas of particular beings. Perhaps it finds in the wealth of its own supply sufficient reality to give to finite ideas that which they want in order to be infinite. I do not know whether this is what you have been taught, but I believe I do know that you have never comprehended it.

ARISTES. If our ideas were infinite, assuredly they would not be products of our work nor modifications of our mind. That cannot be disputed. But perhaps they are finite, though through them we can think of the Infinite. Or perhaps the Infinite which we see is not really infinite. It may be, as I have just said, a confused conglomeration of several finite things. The general idea of Being is perhaps only a confused mass of particular beings. I have some difficulty in ridding my mind of this thought.

IX. THEODORE. Yes, Aristes, our ideas are finite, if by our ideas you understand our perceptions or the modifications of our minds. But if you understand by the idea of the Infinite that which the mind sees when it thinks of it, or that which is then the immediate object of the mind, assuredly that is infinite, for it is seen as such. Note, I say it is seen as such. The impression which the Infinite makes on the mind is finite. There is even more perception in the mind, and the idea makes a

greater impression, in a word, there is more thought, when we know a small object clearly and distinctly, than when we think confusedly of a big object or even of the Infinite. But, though the mind is nearly always more affected, penetrated, modified by a finite idea than by an infinite one, there is nevertheless more reality in the infinite idea than in the finite one, more reality in Being without restriction than in any finite being you could mention.

You cannot rid your mind of the thought that general ideas are no more than a confused collection of certain particular ideas, or at least of the thought that you have the power to form them out of this collective whole. Let us see how much truth and how much falsehood there is in this thought for which you show so strong a bias. You think, Aristes, now of a circle with a diameter of one foot, then of one whose diameter is two feet, three feet, four feet, etc., and finally you do not determine the length of the diameter at all, and you think of a circle in general. The idea of this circle in general, you would say, is the confused collection of the circles of which you have thought. This conclusion is certainly false. For the idea of a circle in general represents infinite circles and is applicable to them all, and you have only thought of a finite number of circles. What happens must rather be that you have discovered the secret of forming the idea of a circle in general out of five or six circles that you have seen, and this is true in one sense and false in another. It is false if you mean that there is enough reality in the idea of five or six circles to form the idea of a circle in general. But it is true in the sense that after having recognised that the magnitude of the circles does not change their properties, you have perhaps ceased to consider them one after another as having a determinate magnitude in order to consider in general only an indeterminate magnitude. Thus you have, so to speak, formed the idea of a circle in general by spreading the idea of generality over the confused ideas of the circles which you have imagined. Yet I submit to you that you can form general ideas at all only because you find in the idea of Infinity enough reality to give generality to your ideas. You can think of an indeterminate diameter only because you see the infinite in extension and because you can increase or diminish it *ad infinitum*. I submit to you that you could never think of the abstract forms of genera and species, if the idea of the Infinite which is inseparable from your mind did not naturally become united with the particular idea of which

you are aware. You could think of a definite circle, but not of a circle in general. You could become aware of a certain definite equality between radii but not of a general equality between indeterminate radii.

The reason is that no finite and determinate idea can ever represent anything infinite or indeterminate. The mind, however, without any reflection adds to its finite ideas the idea of generality which it finds in the Infinite. For just as the mind spreads over the idea of a definite extension, though it be divisible *ad infinitum*, the idea of indivisible unity, so it spreads over certain particular ideas the general idea of perfect equality. And it is this which leads the mind into an infinite number of errors. For all the falsity of our ideas has its source in the fact that we confuse them one with another and further with our own mental modifications. But of this we shall speak on another occasion.

ARISTES. What you say is all very well, Theodore. But, are you not looking upon ideas as entirely distinct from our perceptions? It seems to me that the idea of a circle in general is only a confused perception of several circles of varied size, in other words, a collection of diverse, rather indistinct mental modifications, each of which is the idea or the perception of a certain circle.

X. THEODORE. Yes, without doubt,[1] I think there is a good deal of difference between our ideas and our perceptions, between ourselves who are aware and that of which we are aware. For I know that the finite cannot find within itself that whereby to represent the Infinite. I know that I do not possess within myself any intelligible reality, and that so far from finding in my own substance the idea of all things I cannot even find therein the idea of my own being. For I am entirely unintelligible to myself, and I can never see what I am except when it pleases God to disclose to me the idea or archetype of minds which is comprised in the universal Reason. But of this we shall speak on another occasion.[2]

Assuredly, Aristes, if your ideas were only modifications of your mind, the confused collection of thousands upon thousands of ideas would only yield a confused complex, incapable of any generality. Take twenty colours, mix them together so as to excite in you a sensation of a colour in general. At the same time

[1] Cf. *Réponse au livre des Vraies et des Fausses Idées.*
[2] Cf. *Recherche*, Bk. III, Pt. II, Ch. VII.

produce within yourself several different feelings or sensations so as to form a sensation or feeling in general. You will soon see that this is impossible. For in mixing diverse colours you turn green, grey, blue into what is after all always some particular colour. Dizziness is but a confused agglomeration of sensations or modifications of the soul; yet it is after all a particular feeling or sensation. This is so because every modification of a particular being and of our mind cannot but be particular. It can never rise to the generality which ideas possess. It is true you can think of pain in general, but your mind could never be modified except by a particular pain. And if you can think of pain in general, it is because you can add generality to all things. But, now, you could not obtain this idea of generality from the resources of your own mind. It has too much reality. It follows, therefore, that the Infinite Mind must furnish you with it out of its own abundance.

ARISTES. I have nothing to say in reply. All that you are telling me seems to be evident, but I am surprised that these general ideas, which have infinitely more reality than particular ideas, should affect or touch me less than these latter, and should appear to me to have much less solidity.

XI. THEODORE. That is so because they make themselves felt in a less degree, or rather because they do not make themselves felt at all. Do not judge, Aristes, of the reality of ideas in the way children judge of the reality of bodies. Children think that the space between the earth and the sky is not real because it does not make itself felt. And there are few people who discern that there is just as much matter in a cubic foot of air as in a cubic foot of lead, because lead is harder, heavier, in a word, more capable of affecting the senses than air. Do not follow their example. Judge the reality of ideas not by the feelings which you have of them, which indicate their action upon you in a confused manner, but by the light of intelligence which reveals their nature to you. Otherwise you will think that the ideas which are sensed and those which affect you, as, for example, the idea which you have of the floor which you press with your foot, have more reality than the purely intelligible ideas, though at bottom there is no difference.

ARISTES. *No difference,* Theodore? Do you mean to assert that the idea of extension of which I think is not different from

the idea of the extension which I see, which I press with my foot, which offers resistance?

XII. THEODORE. No, Aristes, there are not two kinds of extension, nor two kinds of ideas representative of them. And if this extension of which you think were to touch you or to modify your soul affectively, intelligible though it be, it would appear to you sensible. It would appear to you hard, cold, coloured, and perhaps painful, for you would perhaps attribute to it all the feelings which you would have. Once more, we must not judge of things by the feelings which we have of them. We must not think that ice has more reality than water because it exhibits a greater resistance.

If you believed that fire had more force or efficiency than earth, your mistake would have some justification. For there is some reason for judging of the magnitude of forces by that of their effects. But to believe that the idea of extension which affects you through some feeling is of another nature, or has more reality, than the extension of which you think, without having a sensible impression of it, is to take the absolute for the relative, or to judge of the nature of things as they are in themselves through the relation in which they stand to us. Along that line we should ascribe more reality to the point of a thorn than to all the rest of the universe, or even to the infinite Being. When you get accustomed to distinguishing your feelings from your ideas, you will recognise that the same idea of extension can be known, imagined, felt, according to the various ways in which the divine Substance which comprises it applies it to your mind. Do not believe then that the Infinite, or Being in general, has less reality than the idea of a definite object which is affecting you at the moment in a very vivid and sensible fashion. Judge of things by the ideas which represent them, and do not attribute to them anything that resembles the feelings that affect you. Later you will understand more clearly what at present I am merely indicating in outline.

ARISTES. All that you have just told me, Theodore, is fearfully abstract, and I have difficulty in keeping a firm hold upon it. My mind is strangely overstrained; a little repose, if you please. I must think over all these great and sublime truths at my leisure. I will endeavour to make myself familiar with them by the difficult effort of pure attention. But at present

I am not capable of such an effort. I must have rest in order to recoup my strength.

THEODORE. I knew quite well, Aristes, that you could not keep your mind clear for long. Go, lead your body to the pasture ground. Refresh your imagination with a variety of reassuring and pleasing things. But try nevertheless to retain some taste for truth, and as soon as you feel yourself capable of nourishing yourself with it and of meditating upon it, leave all else for its sake. Forget even what you are as much as possible. You needs must attend to the wants of the body, but it is a great mistake to occupy yourself with its pleasures.

THIRD DIALOGUE

The difference between our feelings and our ideas—We must judge of things only by the ideas which are representative of them, and not by the feelings by which we are affected through their presence or on their occasion.

THEODORE. Hallo, Aristes! How dreamy you look! What is it you are thinking of so deeply?

ARISTES. Who is it? Ah, Theodore, you have taken me by surprise. I am returning from that other world into which you have led me of late. I go there now all alone and without fearing the phantoms which bar the entrance. But, once there, I find so many obscure places that I am afraid I shall be led astray and get lost.

I. THEODORE. It is much, Aristes, to be able to leave one's body when one wishes and to raise oneself in spirit into the land of intelligence. But it is not sufficient. It is necessary to know the map of the country a little, to know which are the places which are inaccessible to poor mortals, and which are the places where they may go freely, without fearing any illusions. It is, it seems to me, through not having paid heed to what I have just indicated that most of the travellers in these dangerous realms have been misled by certain attractive appearances which lead us to those precipices, from which to return is morally impossible. Listen to me seriously. I am going to tell you to-day what you ought never to forget.

Never take your own feelings, Aristes, for our ideas, the modifications which affect your soul for the ideas which illumine all minds. This is the most important of all precepts for the avoidance of error. You can never contemplate any idea without discovering some truth, but whatever attention you pay to the modifications of your own mind, you will never be illumined

by them. You cannot quite understand what I am saying; a little further explanation is necessary.

II. You know, Aristes, that the Divine Word, as the universal Reason, comprises within its substance the primordial ideas of all beings, created or possible. You know that all the intelligences which are united with this sovereign Reason discover therein some of these ideas, according as it pleases God to manifest such ideas to them. This happens in consequence of the general laws which He has established in order to make us rational and in order to form among ourselves, and with Him, a kind of society. Some day I will unravel this mystery for you. You do not doubt, for example, that intelligible extension, which is the primordial idea or the archetype of bodies, is comprised in the universal Reason which illumines all minds, and even that mind with which this Reason is consubstantial. But perhaps you have not reflected sufficiently on the difference which subsists between the intelligible ideas which it contains and our own feelings, or the modifications of our soul, or you believe perhaps that it is not important to notice in what exactly this difference consists.

III. What a difference there is, my dear Aristes, between the light of our ideas and the obscurity of our feelings, between knowing and sentience, and how necessary it is to become accustomed to distinguish them without difficulty! He who has not reflected sufficiently upon this difference, always believing that he knows quite clearly what he feels most vividly, cannot but be led astray in the darkness of his own states of mind. For, note carefully this important truth. Man cannot be to himself his own light. His substance, far from enlightening him, is itself unintelligible to him. He knows nothing except by the light of reason, by which I mean the universal Reason which enlightens all minds by the intelligible ideas which it reveals to them in its ever luminous substance.

IV. Created reason, our soul, the human mind, the purest and sublimest intelligences, can see the light, but they cannot produce it or extract it from their own being; they cannot engender it from their own substance. They can discover eternal,

immutable, necessary truths in the Divine Word, in the eternal, immutable and necessary Wisdom. But in themselves they can find nothing but feelings, which, though often very vivid, are always obscure and confused, nothing but states of mind full of darkness. In a word, they cannot discover truth by contemplating themselves. They cannot feed on their own substance. They can only find the life of intelligence in the universal Reason which animates all minds.

ARISTES. I am quite convinced, Theodore, by reflection on what you have been telling me during the last few days, that it is the Divine Word alone which enlightens us by means of the intelligible ideas which it contains. For there are not two or more Wisdoms, two or more universal Reasons. Truth is immutable, necessary, eternal, the same in time and in eternity, the same in us and in strangers, the same in heaven and hell. The eternal Word speaks the same language to all nations, to the Chinese and Tartars as to the French and Spaniards; and if they are not all equally enlightened, it is because they are not equally attentive, it is because they confuse, in varied degrees, the particular impulses of their self-love with the general responses of inner truth. Twice two are four for all peoples. All understand the voice of truth which bids us not to do to others that which we do not wish to be done to ourselves. And those who do not obey this voice feel inner reproaches threatening them and punishing them for their disobedience, provided they enter into themselves and listen to reason. I am now well convinced of these principles, but I do not yet fully understand the difference between knowing and sentience or feeling which you think so necessary for the avoidance of error. Pray explain it to me.

V. THEODORE. If you had meditated carefully upon the principles of which you say you are convinced, you would see clearly what you ask me to explain. But without setting out upon a road too difficult to follow, pray answer this question. Do you think that God feels the pain which we suffer?

ARISTES. No, without a doubt, for the feeling of pain brings unhappiness with it.

THEODORE. Very well; but do you believe that He is aware of it?

ARISTES. Yes, I believe so. For He knows all that befalls His creatures God's knowledge has no limits, and the know-

ledge of my pain does not make Him either unhappy or imperfect. On the contrary . . .

THEODORE. Oh, oh, Aristes! God is aware of pain, pleasure, heat and the rest, and He does not feel them! He is aware of pain because He knows the nature of that modification of the soul in which pain consists. He is aware of it, because it is He Himself who causes it in us, as I shall show you in the sequel, and because He knows well what He does. In a word, He is aware of it because His knowledge has no limits. But He does not feel it, for that would make Him unhappy. To know pain, then, is not to feel it.

ARISTES. That is true. But is not a feeling of pain what is meant by a knowledge of it?

VI. THEODORE. No, without a doubt, since God never feels it, and yet He knows it perfectly. But in order not to waste time on merely verbal distinctions, you must admit, even if you think that to feel pain is to know it, that the knowledge involved is not a clear knowledge, not a knowledge based on light and reason. In other words, it is not a knowledge of its nature, so that, strictly speaking, it is not knowledge. To feel pain, for example, is to feel oneself unhappy without knowing either what one is, or what modification of our being it is, which renders us unhappy. But knowledge implies that we have a clear idea of the nature of the object and can discover definite relations in it by means of reason and evidence.

I know clearly the parts of extension because I can plainly see the relations between them. I see clearly that similar triangles have their sides proportional, and that there is no triangle whose three angles do not equal two right angles. I see these truths or relations clearly in the idea or archetype of extension, for this idea is so luminous that it is to a contemplation of it we owe our geometricians and physicists; and it is so fruitful of truths that not even all minds in conjunction will ever exhaust it.

VII. This is not the case with my own being. Of it I have no idea; of it I do not see the archetype. I cannot discover the relations of the modifications which affect my mind. I cannot by turning into or towards myself decipher the nature of any of my faculties or capacities. The inner feeling which I have of myself teaches me that I am, that I think, will, feel, suffer, etc.;

but it does not enable me to know what I am, or what is the nature of my thought, my will, my feelings, my passions, my pain, or what are the relations which subsist among these things; because, having no idea of my soul, not seeing its archetype in the Divine Word, I can discover, through contemplation of it, neither what it is nor the modifications of which it is capable, nor the relations which subsist between these modifications—relations which I feel vividly, though I do not know them. All this is clear enough, Aristes, because, as I have already told you, I cannot be a light to myself, because my substance and its modes are enveloped in obscurity, and because, for several reasons, God has not found it fit to reveal to me the idea or archetype representative of the nature of spiritual beings. For, if my substance were intelligible through or in itself, if it were luminous, if it could enlighten me, as I am not separate from myself, I could certainly see, by contemplating myself, that I am capable of being affected by certain feelings which I have never experienced and of which I shall never perhaps have any knowledge. I should not need a concert in order to know the sweetness of harmony; and, though I had never tasted a certain fruit, I could, I do not say feel, but know, clearly, the nature of the feeling which it would excite in me. But, as we can only know the nature of things in that Reason which contains them in an intelligible manner, it follows that though I can feel myself in myself, it is only in the divine Reason that I could discover what I am and what the modifications are of which I am capable, and a fortiori it is in that Reason alone, that I could discover the principles of the sciences and all the truths capable of elucidating the nature of the mind.

ARISTES. Let us move on a little further, Theodore. I believe that there are essential differences between knowing and feeling, between ideas which enlighten the mind and feelings which affect it, and I agree that though I can feel myself in myself, yet I cannot know what I am as in that Reason which contains the archetype of my being and the intelligible ideas of all things.

VIII. THEODORE. Very well, Aristes. You are now ready to make thousands upon thousands of discoveries in the realm of truth. Distinguish our ideas from your feelings, but distinguish them clearly. Once again, distinguish them clearly, and all the enticing phantoms of which I have spoken to you will no

longer lead you into error. Lift yourself always above yourself. The modifications of your mind are full of obscurity, bear this fact in view. Ascend higher and higher to Reason, and you will see the light. Silence your senses, your imagination, your passions, and you will hear the pure voice of inner truth, the clear and evident responses of our common Master. Do not confuse the evidence furnished by a comparison of ideas, with the vivacity of the feelings which affect or disturb you. The more vivid our feelings are, the more obscurity do they cause. The more terrible or agreeable our images are, the more they appear to have body and reality, the more dangerous are they, and the more likely to mislead us. Disperse them or distrust them. In a word, avoid all that touches or affects you, and hasten to attach yourself to all that enlightens you. We must follow reason despite the enticements, the menaces, the insults of the body, with which we are united, despite the action of the objects of our environment. Do you understand all this quite clearly? Are you convinced by the reasons which I have given you and by your own reflections?

ARISTES. Your exhortations, Theodore, appear to me rather heated for a discussion on metaphysics. It seems to me that you are exciting feelings in me, instead of engendering in me clear ideas. I use your language. But really I understand none too well all that you have told me. Now I see it, and a moment after I see it no longer. That is because as yet I can only half see it. It seems to me that you are right, but I do not understand you thoroughly.

IX. THEODORE. Ah, my dear Aristes, your reply is yet another proof of what we have just been saying. There is no harm in your reflecting upon it. I tell you what I see, and you do not see it. This proves that man cannot instruct man. And that is so because I am not your master or your teacher. I am only a monitor, emphatic perhaps, but not precise and little understood. I talk into your ear. To all appearances I produce noise enough. But our only Master does not as yet speak clearly enough to your mind; or rather, reason speaks to it incessantly, quite clearly, but through lack of attention you do not hear sufficiently well what it tells. I was under the impression, however, both on account of the things you have just told me, and on account of those which I have told you myself, that you understood

sufficiently both my principle and the conclusions that must be drawn therefrom. But I see now that it is not enough for me to give you general considerations based upon abstract and metaphysical ideas. I must in addition furnish some detailed proofs of the necessity of these general considerations.

I have asked you to accustom yourself to recognising without difficulty the difference between knowing and feeling, between our clear ideas and our ever obscure and confused feelings. And I submit to you that this alone is sufficient to enable us to discover an infinity of truths. I do so on the ground that Reason alone can enlighten us, that we cannot be a light to ourselves, nor can any intelligence be a light to any other. You will see clearly whether this argument is satisfactory when, no longer listening to me, you come, in your own room, attentively to consult inner truth. But in order to facilitate the understanding of my principle and to make you see its necessity, and the consequences that follow from it, I will ask you to answer me. You are expert in music, for I have often seen you playing musical instruments in a very efficient and masterly manner.

ARISTES. I have skill enough to charm away annoyance and to banish melancholy.

X. THEODORE. Very well. Would you explain to me, pray, the nature of those sounds which you combine in so exact and pleasant a manner? What is an octave, a fifth and a fourth? How does it come about that when two strings are in unison, you cannot touch one without setting the other in vibration? You have a very fine and delicate ear. Consult it, so that it may teach you what I wish to learn from you.

ARISTES. Surely you are making fun of me. It is reason and not the senses which must be consulted.

THEODORE. That is true. The senses have to be consulted only as regards the facts. Their power is very limited, but reason reaches all things. Consult it, then, and beware of confusing its deliverances with the testimony of your senses. Well, what does it reply?

ARISTES. You are hurrying me too much. Still, it seems to me that sound is a quality propagated in the air capable of affecting only the sense of hearing; for each sense has its own peculiar object.

THEODORE. Is that what you call consulting reason?

ARISTES. What do you wish me to tell you? Wait, here is an octave—La-la. Here is a fifth—Doh-soh. Here is a fourth—Doh-fa.

THEODORE. You sing well, but how badly you reason! It strikes me you wish to have a little recreation.

ARISTES. Certainly, Theodore. But, as to your other question, I say it is through sympathy that strings of the same sound set one another in vibration. Have I not answered well?

THEODORE. Let us speak seriously, Aristes. If you wish to entertain me, try to instruct me.

ARISTES. I shall do nothing of the kind, with your permission. Do your part, and leave me to do mine. My part is to listen.

THEODORE. That is very nice and agreeable of you, Aristes! Come, then, lend me this monochord and pay attention to what I am going to do and what I am going to say. In pulling or in drawing this string towards me I move it out of its natural position, and when I let it go you see without any need of proof that for some time it moves hither and thither, and that in this way it causes a large number of vibrations and consequently many other smaller motions imperceptible to our senses. For a straight line being shorter than a curve, no string can make its vibrations, in other words become alternatingly straight and curved, without the parts which compose it lengthening or shortening very quickly. But, I ask you, is not a moving body capable of setting in motion whatever it meets? This string can therefore disturb the air which surrounds it and even the subtle medium which penetrates its pores, and this sets in motion something else in your ear and in mine.

ARISTES. That is true. But what I hear is a sound, a sound propagated in the air, a quality which is quite different from the vibrations of a chord or from the agitations of the air which has been disturbed.

THEODORE. Gently, Aristes. Do not consult your senses, and do not judge on the strength of their testimony. It is true that sound is something entirely different from disturbed air. But, on that very account, you are wrong in saying that the sound is propagated in the air. For, note this, when I touch this string, I am merely setting it in vibration, and all a vibrating string can do is to agitate the air which surrounds it.

ARISTES. *A vibrating string can only agitate the air which*

surrounds it! Why, do you not hear that it produces a sound in the air?

THEODORE. Apparently, I hear what you hear. But when I wish to be instructed with regard to a certain truth, I do not consult my ears, and you consult yours, notwithstanding the good resolutions which you have made. Enter, then, into yourself and consult the clear ideas which reason contains. Is it your conception that air and any small bodies are capable, when agitated in a given manner, of containing this sound which you hear, and that a string can produce it? Once again, do not consult your ears, and for greater safety imagine that you are deaf. Consider attentively the clear idea of extension;—it is the archetype of bodies, it represents their nature and their properties. Is it not evident that all the possible properties of extension cannot be anything but relations of distance? Ponder this seriously.

ARISTES. That is evident. All the properties of extension can consist only in its different modes of being. These can only be relations of distance.

THEODORE. It follows that all the possible properties or modifications of extension are only figures or stable and permanent spatial relations, and movements, or successive and ever changing spatial relations. Hence the sound, which you agree is a different thing from the movement, is not spread out in the air, and a chord cannot produce it. It cannot be anything but a sensation or a modification of the soul.

ARISTES. I see quite clearly that I must either agree with you or deny the principle that the idea of extension represents the nature of bodies. Perhaps it represents only one of its properties. Indeed, who has told us that bodies are nothing but extension? Perhaps the essence of matter consists in some other thing, and this other thing may be capable of containing sounds and even of producing them. Prove to me that the contrary is true.

THEODORE. But do you prove yourself that the other thing in which, according to you, the essence of matter is to consist will not be capable of thinking, of willing, of reasoning? I maintain that the chords of your lute think just as you do, or, at least, that they are complaining because you disturb their repose. Prove the contrary to me, and I will convince you that they do not give rise to any sound.

ARISTES. It is true that if the nature of bodies consists in

something other than extension, I cannot prove to you, not having any idea of this "something other," that it does not think. But I ask you to prove to me that matter is nothing else but extension, and that it is, therefore, incapable of thought. This seems to me necessary in order to silence those infidels who confuse the soul with the body, and who maintain that the one is mortal just like the other; for, according to them, all our thoughts are only modes of this unknown thing which we call body, and all modes can cease to be.

XI. THEODORE. I have already answered the question which you put to me.[1] But it is so important that, though it is not to the point, I am very glad to point out that its solution depends, just like all other truths, upon the great principle, that the universal Reason comprises the ideas which enlighten us; and, as the works of God were made according to these ideas, we cannot do better than contemplate them, in order to discover the properties of created entities. Observe now. We can think of extension without thinking of any other thing. It is, therefore, a being or a substance and not a mode or manner of being. For we cannot think of a mode of being without thinking of the being which it modifies. For modes of a being are nothing but the being itself determined in a certain way. We cannot think of figures and movements without thinking of extension, since figures and movements are modes of extension. This is clear unless I am mistaken. And if it does not seem so to you, I submit that you have not any means of distinguishing modes of substances from the substances themselves. If this does not appear to you evident, let us philosophise no more. For . . .

ARISTES. Let us philosophise, I beseech you.

THEODORE. Very well. The idea or archetype of extension is eternal, necessary. We see this idea, as I have already proved to you, and God sees it also, for there is nothing in Him which He does not discover. We see it, I say, clearly and distinctly, without thinking of anything else. We can think of it in itself, or rather we cannot think of it as a modification of some other thing, for it contains no necessary relation to other ideas. But, God can create that which He sees and which He causes us to see in His light clearly and distinctly. He can create whatever

[1] Dialogue I, 2.

is not self-contradictory, for He is all-powerful. Hence He can make extension all by itself. This extension will, then, be a being or a substance, and the idea which we have of it will represent its nature. If we suppose further that God has created this extension, it will follow that there will be matter. For what kind of being would this extension be? Now, I believe that you see that this matter is not capable of thinking, feeling, or reasoning.

ARISTES. I admit that, since our ideas are necessary and eternal and the same as God consults, it follows, that if He acts at all, He will take that which these ideas represent, and that we are not mistaken when we attribute to matter only that which we see in its archetype. Yet perhaps we do not see this archetype in its entirety. Since modes of extension can only be spatial relations, it follows that extension is not capable of thought. I agree. But the subject or bearer of extension, that something which is perhaps contained in the archetype of matter and which is to us unknown, that may very well be able to think.

XII. THEODORE. This unknown something will be able to do a good many other things; it will be able to do whatsoever you choose to ascribe to it without anyone being able to dispute your assertions. It may have thousands upon thousands of faculties, virtues, admirable qualities. It may be able to act on your soul, enlighten it, render it happy and unhappy. In a word, it will have as many powers, and if you press the point as many divinities, as there are different bodies. For, indeed, how do I know that this other thing, which you take to be the essence of matter, will not have all the properties which it may please you to ascribe to it, since I have no knowledge of it whatever?

Thus you see, perhaps, that in order to know the works of God, it is necessary to consult the ideas which He gives us of them, those ideas which are clear and in accordance with which He has formed them; and that we run a great risk, if we follow another course. For if we consult our senses, if we blindly yield to their testimony, they will persuade us that there are at least certain bodies, the power and intelligence of which are marvellous. Our senses tell us that fire diffuses heat and light. They persuade us that animals and plants work for the preservation of their

life and of their species, with a kind of intelligence. Yet we see that these faculties are something other than figures and movements. We judge, then, on the ground of the confused and obscure deliverances of our senses, that there must be in bodies something other than extension, since modes of extension can only be motions and figures. But let us attentively consult reason. Let us linger over the clear idea which we have of body. Let us not confuse it with our own being, and we shall find perhaps that we attribute to such bodies qualities and properties which they do not possess and which belong to us alone.

It may be, you argue, that we do not see the archetype or idea of matter in its entirety. If that were so, we ought only to attribute to it what our idea of it represents to us, for we cannot ascribe to anything that which we do not know. Assuredly, if unbelievers think that they are permitted to reason about chimeras of which they have no idea whatever, they must allow that we can reason about things by the ideas which we have of them. But, in order to remove everything which may be a cause of stumbling or of their gaining confidence in their strange errors, note once more, that we can think of extension without thinking of any other thing; for it is here that the principle lies. Hence, God could make extension without making anything else. This extension would then exist without the unknown something which they attribute to matter. This extension would then be a substance and not a modification of substance. And this is what, for several reasons, I believe we ought to call body or matter; not only because we cannot think of modifications without thinking of the entities of which they are the modifications, or because there is no other way of distinguishing entities from their modes than by ascertaining whether we can think of the former without thinking of the latter, but also because by means of extension alone and the properties ascribed to it by everybody we can explain sufficiently all the natural effects; I mean that we observe no effect of matter the natural cause of which cannot be found in the idea of extension.

ARISTES. What you are saying now appears to me convincing. I understand better than I did that, in order to know the works of God, it is necessary to consult attentively the ideas which He possesses in His wisdom and to silence our senses and above all our imagination. Yet this way of discovering truth is so hard and difficult that there is hardly anybody who follows

it. To see that the sun is brilliant with light we need only open our eyes. To ascertain whether sound is in the air, it is sufficient to make a noise. Nothing is easier. But the mind is overstrained when attending to ideas which do not strike the senses. One soon gets tired: I know this from experience. Happy you who can meditate on metaphysical matters!

THEODORE. I am made just like others, my dear Aristes. Judge me by yourself, and I shall feel honoured; you cannot make a mistake except perhaps in my favour. What do you expect? This difficulty which we all find in uniting ourselves with reason is a penalty and a proof of sin, and the rebellion of the body is the cause of it. We are condemned to gain our living by the sweat of our brow. Now, the mind must work if it is to nourish itself upon truth. That is common to all men. But believe me, this spiritual food is so delicious, and gives the soul such enthusiasm, that once one has tasted of it, though one should tire of searching for it, one never tires of desiring it and of beginning one's search again and again, since it is for this purpose that we are made. But if I have fatigued you, give me the instrument, so that I may relieve your attention, and that I may as far as possible render sensible the truths which I wish to make you understand.

ARISTES. What do you wish to do? I understand clearly that sound is not propagated in the air, and that a string cannot produce it. The reasons which you have just given me are to me convincing. For, in short, neither sound nor the power to produce it is contained in the idea of matter, since the modifications of body consist in nothing but spatial relations. That is sufficient for me. Nevertheless, here is another proof which occurs to me and which is convincing. In a fever which I had some time ago I heard the incessant howling of an animal which without a doubt did not howl, seeing that it was dead. I believe also that in sleep it happens to you as well as to me that one hears a concert, or at least the sound of a trumpet or drum, though everything may be in a deep silence. Being ill, then, I heard yells and howlings, for I remember to this day that they caused me much pain. But these unpleasant sounds were not in the air, although I heard them therein, just as I hear therein the sounds which this instrument makes. Thus, in spite of the fact that we hear sounds as though they were propagated in the air, it does not follow from this fact that they are really

there. They exist really only in the soul, for they are only sensations which affect it, only modifications which belong to it. Nay, I go even further. For all that you have just told me induces me to believe that there is nothing in the objects of our senses resembling the sensations which we have of them. These objects stand in a certain relation to their ideas, but it seems to me that they stand in no relation to our sensations. Bodies are nothing but extension capable of motion and of various figures. This becomes clear when we consult the ideas which represent them.

THEODORE. Bodies, you say, have nothing that resembles the sensations which we have, and in order to know their properties we must consult not our senses, but the clear idea of extension which represents their nature. Remember well this important truth.

ARISTES. That truth is evident, and I shall never forget it.

XIII. THEODORE. Never! Tell me, then, pray, what is an octave and a fifth. Or rather instruct me what I must do in order to hear these consonances?

ARISTES. That is quite easy. Strike the whole string, put your finger there, and then strike either division of the string, and you will hear the octave.

THEODORE. Why should I put my finger there and not here?

ARISTES. Because here you would get a fifth, and not an octave. Just look. All the tones are marked here. Why do you laugh?

THEODORE. Now I know all about it, Aristes. I can make you hear all the tones I desire. But if we had broken your instrument, all our science would be shattered into bits.

ARISTES. Not at all. I could easily make another. It is only a string on a board. Anybody can make that.

THEODORE. Yes, but that is not enough. It is necessary to mark out the consonances on the board exactly. How would you divide it up in order to mark the points where the finger must be placed in order to hear the octave, the fifth and the other consonances?

ARISTES. I should strike the whole string; and, by sliding my finger along it, I should obtain the tone that I wished to mark. For I know enough music to tune an instrument.

THEODORE. Your method is hardly exact, for you find what you want only by feeling your way. But if you became deaf, or rather, if the little muscle which stretches the drum skin in your ear and puts it in tune with your instrument were to be relaxed, what would become of your science? Could you any longer mark out exactly the different tones? May not a person become deaf without forgetting music? If you forget, your knowledge is not based on clear ideas. Reason has no part in it; for reason is immutable and necessary.

ARISTES. Ah, Theodore, I had already forgotten what I have just said I would never forget. What am I thinking of? I have given you some amusing answers. You had good ground for laughing at them. It is only natural that I listen more to my senses than to my reason; I am so used to consulting my ears that I did not think sufficiently of what you were asking me. I will give you another answer with which you will be more satisfied. In order to mark the octave on this instrument it is necessary to divide into two equal parts the space which corresponds to the string. For if, having struck the whole string, one then touches either half, one gets an octave. If one strikes the whole, and then two-thirds, we get the fifth, and lastly, if one touches the whole, and then three-fourths, we get the fourth, and these latter two consonances will equal an octave.

XIV. THEODORE. This reply is instructive. I understand it distinctly. I see by means of it that the octave, or rather the natural cause which produces it, is as 2 to 1, the fifth as 3 to 2, the fourth as 4 to 3. These numerical relations are clear. And, since you tell me that a string divided and struck in accordance with the magnitudes denoted by these numbers yields these consonances, if I were to become deaf I should be able to mark them on the monochord. Thus you see what it is to reason by means of clear ideas; people are instructed in a thorough manner. But why do a fifth and a fourth equal one octave?

ARISTES. Because sound is to sound as string to string. Thus, since an octave is heard when we touch a string and then the half of it, the octave is as 2 to 1, or which is the same thing as 4 to 2. Now, the ratio of 4 to 2 is composed of the ratios of 4 to 3, which is the fourth, and of 3 to 2, which is the fifth. For, as you know, the ratio of one number to another is made up of all the ratios which subsist between all the numbers which

these two numbers contain. The ratio of 3 to 6, for example, which is that of 1 to 2, is made up of the ratios of 3 to 4, 4 to 5 and 5 to 6; and thus you see that the major third and the minor third are equivalent to the fifth. For the ratio of 4 to 6, which equals the ratio of 2 to 3, is made up of the ratios 4 to 5, which is the major third, and 5 to 6, which is the minor third.

THEODORE. I understand all this clearly, if we grant that sound is to sound as chord to chord. But I do not quite understand the principle. Do you think it is based on clear ideas?

ARISTES. Yes, I think so. For the string and its various vibrations are the cause of the various sounds. But the whole cause is to its half as 2 to 1, and effects are in exact correspondence with their causes. Hence the effect of the whole cause is double that of half the cause. Hence the sound of the whole chord is to the sound of half the string as 2 to 1.

THEODORE. Do you understand distinctly what you are telling me? As for me, I find it rather obscure, and as far as possible I submit only to that evidence which accompanies clear ideas.

ARISTES. What fault do you find in my reasoning?

XV. THEODORE. There is a good deal of intelligence in it. For you are not lacking in that respect. Yet the principle is obscure. It does not rest upon clear ideas. Pay attention now. You think you know what you only feel, and you take for a principle a prejudice, the falsity of which you have already recognised. But in order to make you realise the falsity of your proof, allow me to make a little experiment on you. Give me your hand. I shall not do you any great harm. Now that I rub the hollow of your hand with the end of my sleeve, do you not feel anything?

ARISTES. I feel a little heat or a kind of tickling, which is not disagreeable.

THEODORE. And now?

ARISTES. Ah, Theodore, you are hurting me. You are rubbing it too hard. I feel a pain which upsets me.

THEODORE. You are mistaken, Aristes. Let me continue. You are feeling a pleasure two or three times greater than that which you felt just now. I can prove it to you by your own reasoning. Observe. My rubbing your hand is the cause of what you feel. But the whole cause is to its half as 2 to 1, and

effects correspond exactly with the action of their causes. Hence, the effect of the whole cause or the whole action of the cause is double the effect of its half. Hence, in rubbing you twice as hard or twice as quickly, the redoubled movement should produce twice as much pleasure. Hence, I have not caused you any pain, unless you maintain that pain is to pleasure as 2 to 1.

ARISTES. I am punished, indeed, for reasoning with the aid of an obscure principle. You have hurt me; and as an excuse you prove to me that you have given me a double pleasure. That is not very agreeable.

THEODORE. You have been let off easily. For had we been near the fire I might have done worse.

ARISTES. What would you have done to me?

THEODORE. Very likely I should have taken a burning coal and at first brought it somewhat near to your hand; and, if you had said that that was pleasant, I should have applied it to your hand in order to give you more of it; and, then, I should have proved to you by your own reasoning that you had no right to complain.

ARISTES. Truly I have had a fortunate escape. Is this the way in which you teach people?

THEODORE. What else should I do? If I give you metaphysical proofs you forget them forthwith. It is necessary, therefore, that I should render them sensuous, so that you should understand them without difficulty and should always remember them. Why have you forgotten so quickly that we must reason only with clear ideas, that a string in motion can only agitate the air which surrounds it and cannot produce the sound which you hear?

ARISTES. Because as I strike the string I hear the sound.

THEODORE. I see that quite well. But you do not conceive clearly that the vibrations of a string can produce or propagate sound. You have agreed to this. For sound is not contained in the idea of matter, still less does matter possess the power of acting on the soul and causing it to hear the sound. From the fact that the vibrations of a chord or of the air are followed by a sound and by a definite sound, you may conclude that things being as they are, that is what must be done in order that a sound should be heard. Yet do not imagine that there is a

necessary relation between these things. Apparently, I do not hear the same sound as you do, though perhaps I hear the same notes or even the same consonances. For if the drum of my ear is smaller or thinner than yours, and is thus caused to adjust itself more easily in taking up another note than in taking up the same—and this is quite probable—assuredly, other things remaining the same, I shall hear a louder sound than you hear, when this string is touched. Lastly, I see no quantitative relations between consonances. It is not clear that the difference between the sounds of which they are made up is that between the greater and the smaller as in the case with the strings that produce them. So much seems to me evident.

ARISTES. That seems to me true. But if the vibrations of a string are not the cause of the sound, how is it that I hear the sound when the string is touched?

THEODORE. This is not the time, Aristes, to solve that problem. When we have dealt with the efficacy of causes, it will be solved without any difficulty. At present, I merely wish to make you notice the difference that subsists between knowing clearly and feeling confusedly. I merely wish to convince you of the important truth, that in order to know the works of God, we must not linger over the sensations which we have of them, but over the ideas which represent them. For I cannot repeat this too often, we must not consult our senses, or our own mental modifications, which are only obscure, but reason, which enlightens us by its divine ideas, that are immutable, necessary and eternal.

ARISTES. I agree. I am fully convinced of this. Let us pass on to some further point, for I am tired of hearing you ceaselessly repeating the same things.

XVI. THEODORE. We will pass on to whatever you please. Yet believe me it is not enough to see a principle, one must see it clearly; for between seeing and seeing there are infinite differences, and the principle I am insisting upon is so necessary and of such great applicability, that it is essential to have it always present to the mind, and not to forget it as you do. But let us see whether you are quite convinced of it and whether you know how to use it. Tell me why it is that two strings being in unison the one cannot be touched without setting the other in vibration.

ARISTES. This question appears to me to be very difficult. For I have read several explanations of it in the works of certain authors, which hardly satisfy me. I fear that my answer will draw forth from you another little jest, or that you will make another experiment, at my cost.

THEODORE. No, no, Aristes, do not be afraid. But do not forget the principle of clear ideas. I ought not to remind you of it so often. But I am afraid lest "sympathy," or some other chimera, should hinder you from following it.

ARISTES. Just let us see. When I touch this string it disturbs the air through its vibrations. But the air, thus disturbed, can communicate some of its movement to the other strings which it meets.

THEODORE. Very well, but the dissonant strings no less than those which produce the same sounds will be disturbed.

ARISTES. That is what I was thinking of. A little "sympathy" would come in very well here, but you will have none of it.

THEODORE. I accept the word quite willingly for what it is worth. There exists a sympathy between the strings of the same sound. That is certain, since they act on each other, for this is what the word means. But whence comes this sympathy? It is there that the difficulty lies.

ARISTES. It is not due to length or thickness, for there is sympathy between unequal strings, and there is no sympathy between equal strings if they do not yield the same sound. Hence, everything must depend on the sound. But now the sound is not a modification of the string, and the string cannot produce it. Whence then comes this sympathy? I am, indeed, in a difficulty.

THEODORE. You are troubled over a little matter. There is sympathy between strings of the same sound. That is the fact which you wish to explain. Find, then, what it is that causes the strings to produce the same sound, and you will have all that is necessary in order to discover what you are in search of.

ARISTES. If two strings are equal in length and size, it will be the equality of their tension that will cause them to give the same sound, and if they are not equal, this will depend on the reciprocal proportion of the length and thickness with their tension.

THEODORE. What, then, does a tension more or less great produce in these equal strings?

ARISTES. It renders them capable of a sound, of a lower or higher pitch.

THEODORE. Yes, but that is not what we want. We are not dealing with the differences between sounds; no sound can disturb a string, for sound is rather the effect than the cause of the movement. Tell me then how the tension causes the sound to become of a higher pitch.

ARISTES. Apparently because it causes the string to have more rapid vibrations.

THEODORE. Good; that is all we want. For the vibration and not the sound of my string can cause yours to vibrate. Two strings equal in length and thickness and of equal tension yield the same sound because they have vibrations which are equal in rapidity; and if one rises higher than the other, that is a sign that it is more tense, and that it makes each of its vibrations more rapidly. But no string can disturb another except by means of its vibrations For no body can move another except by means of its own movement. This being so, tell me now why strings of the same sound communicate their vibrations to one another, and why dissonant strings do not, at least not in any sensible degree.

XVII. ARISTES. I see the reason clearly. Take two strings of the same sound. Here is yours, here is mine. When I release my string, it pushes the air towards you, and this air thus pushed disturbs your string a little. Mine keeps on making a quantity of similar vibrations—in a very short time each of these vibrations disturbs the air, and pushes your string just as the first movement did. It is that which causes it to vibrate. For several small impacts suitably administered can produce a sensible vibration. But when these shocks come out of time, they impede one another. Thus, when two strings are dissonant, or cannot make their vibrations in equal or multiple times because they are not equally stretched, or because they are of unequal or incommensurable length, they cannot disturb each other. For, if the first moves and pushes the air towards you, the second, having a contrary movement and returning towards me, its movements will be hindered instead of strengthened. It is necessary, then, that the vibrations of the strings should take

place in equal or multiple times, so that they mutually communicate to one another a movement sufficiently great to be felt, and their movement is felt the more, the nearer the consonances which they yield approach to unison. That is why in an octave they vibrate to a greater extent than in a fifth, and in a fifth more than in a fourth, because the two strings begin their vibrations most often at the same instant. Are you satisfied with this reason?

THEODORE. Quite, Aristes; for now you have followed the principle of clear ideas. I fully understand that strings of the same sound move each other mutually, not by the sympathy of their sound, for sound cannot be the cause of movement, but by the agreement of their vibrations which disturb or agitate the air in which they are stretched. So long as you reason about the properties of bodies by the aid of figures and movements, I shall be satisfied with you. For your mind is so exact that it is difficult for you to reason badly in following a clear principle. Indeed, if we so often fall into error, it is due rather to the falsity or obscurity of our ideas than to the weakness of our minds. Geometricians seldom err, physicists nearly always. Why is this? Because the latter reason always with the aid of confused ideas, and the former with the aid of the clearest ideas which we have.

ARISTES. I see the necessity of your principle better than ever. You have done well to repeat it so often and thus to make me sensible of it. I will try to remember it. We must not judge of sensible objects by the feelings with which they strike us, but by the ideas which represent them. Our feelings are confused. They are but modifications of our soul which cannot enlighten us. But the ideas which reason discloses to us are luminous; they carry with them their own evidence. It is sufficient to consider them attentively in order to discover their relations, and to receive solid instruction about the truth. Is it not this, Theodore, that you wish me to bear in mind?

THEODORE. Yes, Aristes, and if you do so, you will travel without fear in the realm of intelligences. You will wisely avoid the inaccessible or the dangerous places, and you will no longer be in fear of those seducing phantoms which insensibly lead all the new travellers to these countries into error. But do not imagine that you know well what I have just told you, and what you have yourself repeated. You will only know

it exactly when you have meditated upon it often. For we never completely understand what we are told, unless inner truth repeats it to us when all created things are silent. Adieu, Aristes; I leave you alone with reason. Consult it seriously and forget all else.

FOURTH DIALOGUE

The general nature and properties of the senses—The wisdom of the laws of the conjunction of soul and body—This union changed into a relation of dependence by the sin of the first man.

ARISTES. Where are you coming from, Theodore? I was getting impatient at not meeting you.

I. THEODORE. What, is not reason sufficient for you, and cannot you pass the time pleasantly with it, if Theodore is not among the party? To the blessed spirits reason suffices for all eternity; and yet you are impatient at not seeing me, though I have only left you with it for a few hours. What are you thinking of? Do you believe that I shall allow you to have a blind and intemperate attachment for me! Love reason, consult it, follow it. For I declare to you I renounce the friendship of those who neglect it and who refuse to submit to its laws.

ARISTES. Gently, Theodore. Just listen.

II. THEODORE. There can be no enduring and sincere friendship which does not rest upon reason, upon a good which is immutable, upon a good which all can possess without dividing it. For the friendship which rests upon goods which are divided and which disappear through use always has sad results and lasts only a short time. A dangerous kind of friendship!

ARISTES. Agreed. All that is true, nothing is more certain. Ah, Theodore!

THEODORE. What do you wish to say?

III. ARISTES. What a difference there is between seeing and seeing, between knowing what people tell us, when they tell us, and knowing what reason tells us when it speaks to us! What a difference there is between knowing and feeling, between the ideas which enlighten us, and the confused feelings which agitate and trouble us! How fruitful this principle is! and what light it throws! How many errors and prejudices it disposes of! I have meditated, Theodore, upon this principle, I have followed out its consequences and

have been impatient to see you in order to thank you for having taught it to me. Allow me to tell you what the faithful ones of Samaria said to the Samaritan woman, after they had, like her, heard our common Master. Now we believe, not because of thy saying, they said to the woman, for we have heard Him ourselves and know.[1] Yes, now I am convinced not by the force of your argument but by the evident responses of inner truth. I understand what you have told me. But have I not understood several other things of which you have not spoken to me? I have understood them clearly, and what is most deeply impressed on my memory is the fact that I have lived all my life in illusion, ever misled by the testimony of my senses, ever corrupted by their attractions. How despicable are the goods of the senses! How impotent corporeal things appear to me! No, this sun, however brilliant it may appear to mine eyes, neither possesses nor diffuses the light which enlightens me. All these colours which gladden me by their variety and vivacity, all these beautiful things which charm me when I turn my eyes to all that is around me, belong to myself. All this comes not from corporeal things, it is not in corporeal things. For nothing of all this is contained in the idea of matter. And I feel sure that one must not judge of the works of God by the sensations which one has of them, but by the immutable, eternal and necessary ideas which represent them, by the archetype in accordance with which they have all been formed.

THEODORE. What pleasure it gives me to hear you! I see quite well that you have consulted reason during the time when all creatures were sunk in silence, for you are still fully enlightened, fully animated, fully penetrated, by its light. Ah, what good friends we shall always be, if reason is always our common master, and the bond of our union! We shall both enjoy the same pleasures, we shall both possess the same riches. For truth gives itself wholly to all and in all entirety to each of us. All minds receive nourishment therefrom, without diminishing its abundance. Once again, I rejoice to see you so impressed by the truths which you are recounting to me.

IV. ARISTES. I am also fully conscious of my obligation to you. That was the cause of my impatience. Yes, you have revealed to me the tree of the earthly paradise which gives to

[1] John iv. 42.

our spirits life and immortality. You have shown me the celestial manna with which I must support myself in the desert of the present life. Without my being aware of it, you have conducted me to our inner Master, who alone enlightens all intelligent minds. A quarter of an hour's serious attention to the clear and luminous ideas thus presented to my mind has taught me more truths, has freed me from more prejudices than all that I had read in the books of the philosophers, than all that I had heard my teachers and even you say. For, however exact your expressions are when you speak to me and I consult reason, I get at the same time a confused whir of two different answers, the one sensuous, the other intelligible. And the least of the ill effects resulting therefrom is that the answer which strikes my ear takes up a good deal of the capacity of my mind and diminishes thereby its vivacity and power of penetration. For it requires time to give your words utterance. But all the answers of reason are eternal and immutable. They have always been uttered, or rather they are always being uttered without any temporal succession, and though it takes us some moments to hear them, reason needs none to produce them, for in truth they are never made. They are eternal, immutable, necessary. Allow me to tell you a part of what I believe I have learnt from our common Master, to whom you were charitable enough to introduce me.

V. As soon as you left me, Theodore, I fell into deep meditation in order to consult reason, and I recognised far better than when you were speaking to me and I was yielding to your arguments that the ideas of created beings are eternal, that God has made all bodies in accordance with the idea of extension, that this idea must, therefore, represent their nature, and that I must consequently consider it carefully in order to discover their properties. I understood clearly that to consult my senses, and to seek truth in my own states of mind, was to prefer darkness to light and to abandon reason. At first my senses resisted my conclusions, as though they were jealous of the ideas, as though they saw themselves deprived by them of a privilege which they had long possessed in my mind. But I found so much falsity and so many contradictions in the resistance which they offered, that I condemned them as deceivers and false witnesses. Indeed, I saw nothing convincing in their testimony; and, on the other hand, I noticed a wonderful clearness in the ideas which

they were attempting to obscure. Thus, though they continued speaking to me with confidence, assurance and the utmost importunity, I drove them to silence, and I re-summoned the ideas which were abandoning me because they could not endure the hum and tumult of the mutinous senses.

I must admit, Theodore, that the sensuous proofs which you have given me against the authority of the senses proved wonderfully useful. For it was by means of them that I succeeded in quelling the noisy senses. I convicted them of falsity on their own evidence. They contradicted themselves at every turn. For, apart from the fact that they said nothing which was not incomprehensible and altogether incredible, they gave me the same reports of entirely different things and quite contradictory reports of the same things, according to the interest which they happened to take therein. I, therefore, silenced them, being quite determined no longer to judge of the works of God on the basis of their testimony, but rather on that of the ideas which represent those works and in accordance with which they were formed.

It was in following this principle that I realised that light is neither in the sun nor in the air where we see it; that colours are not on the surface of bodies; that the sun could perhaps set in motion the fine particles of the air, and these latter could communicate the same impression of movement to the optic nerve, and thence to that part of the brain where the soul resides, and that these small bodies in movement when encountering solid objects might be reflected differently according to the diversity in the surfaces which were causing them to rebound. So much for their boasted light and variety of colours.

VI. I have understood likewise that the heat which I feel is not in the fire, nor the cold in the ice, nor even pain in my own body, in which I have often felt it so cruelly acute. Neither is sweetness in the sugar, nor bitterness in the aloes, nor acidity in sour grapes, nor sourness in vinegar, nor that sweetness and strength in wine which deceives and stupefies so many drunkards. I see all this, by the same reason which enabled me to see that sound must be regarded as not in the air and that there is an infinite difference between the vibrations of strings and the sounds which they yield, between the proportions of their vibrations and the variety of the consonances.

It would take me too long, Theodore, if I were to give you in detail all the proofs which have convinced me [1] that bodies have no other qualities than those which result from their figures, not any other activity than their various movements. But I cannot conceal from you a difficulty which, despite all my efforts, I was unable to surmount. I follow, for instance, without misgiving, the action of the sun through all the space which separates it from me. For, granted that there is no empty space, I can understand that the sun can make no impression in the places it occupies without the impression being transmitted to the place which I occupy or to my eyes, and by my eyes to my brain. But, in following the clear idea of movement, I could not understand whence there came to me the sensation of light. I see quite well that the movement of the optic nerve is alone sufficient to produce the sensation in me. For, pressing the corner of my eye with my finger on a spot behind which I know the optic nerve is located, I saw a bright light in a place otherwise dark on the side opposite to that on which my eye was pressed. Yet this change from movement to light seemed to me then and seems to me still altogether incomprehensible. What a strange metamorphosis, from a pressure on the eye to a brilliant light! And this is all the more astounding because I do not see this radiance of light in my soul of which it is the modification, nor in my brain, where the disturbance ends, nor in the eye where the pressure takes place, nor on the side on which I press my eye, but in the air—in the air which surely is incapable of such a modification, and on the side opposite to the eye which I press. What a marvellous thing!

VII. At first I thought that my soul, on being warned of the disturbance that had taken place in my body, was the cause of the sensations which it had of the things around it. But a little reflection undeceived me. For it is not true, it seems to me, that the soul knows anything of the disturbance caused by the sun in the fibres of the brain. I saw light before I knew of this disturbance. For children who do not even know that they have a brain are struck by the brilliance of light just as much as philosophers are. Again, what relation is there between the vibrations of a corporeal thing and the different sensations which follow such vibrations? How can I see light in bodies if it is a modification of my soul, how see it in bodies around me, if the

[1] Cf. *Recherche*, Bk. I, Ch. VI, seq.

disturbance takes place in my body alone? I press the corner of my eye on the right side, why do I see the light on the left side, notwithstanding the fact that I am well aware that it is not on that side that I am pressing?

From all this, and from a number of other things which it would take me too long to tell you, I concluded that the sensations were in myself, that I was in no wise their cause, and that if corporeal things were capable of acting on me and of making themselves felt in the way I feel them, it would be necessary that they should be of a nature more excellent than my body, endowed with a terrible power, and some of them even with a wisdom truly marvellous, always uniform in their behaviour, always effective in their action, always incomprehensible in the astounding results of their power. All this appeared to me tremendous and terrible to think of, though my senses encouraged the madness and quite accommodated themselves to it. But, Theodore, will you kindly clear this matter up for me?

THEODORE. There is no time to resolve your difficulties unless you desire that we should leave the general truths of metaphysics and enter upon an explanation of the principles of physics and of the laws of the conjunction of soul and body.

ARISTES. Say a few words, please, on this point. It will give me much pleasure to meditate upon the matter. My mind is quite prepared for it.

VIII. THEODORE. Listen, then; but remember to meditate upon what I have already told you. When we seek to find the reason of certain effects, and in following the chain of causes and effects arrive at last at a general cause or at a cause that we can quite well see has no relation to the effect which it produces or rather appears to produce, then instead of being satisfied with chimeras, we ought to have recourse to the author of the laws of nature. For example, if you were to ask me what is the cause of the pain which one feels when one is pricked, I should be wrong to tell you forthwith that it is one of the laws of the author of nature that a prick should be followed by pain. I ought to tell you that the prick cannot separate the fibres of my flesh without disturbing the nerves which propagate stimulation to the brain, and without disturbing the brain itself. But if you wish to know how it is that when a certain part of my brain is disturbed in a given way, I feel the pain of a prick, this question

concerns a general effect; and, as one cannot by tracing the matter further, find a natural or particular cause, one must have recourse to a general cause. For this amounts to a question as to who is the author of the general laws of the conjunction of soul and body. Now, since admittedly, there can be no relation or necessary connection between a disturbance in the brain and certain sensations, it is evident that we must have recourse to a power which is not to be met with in either of these entities. It is not sufficient to say that as the prick wounds the body, the soul must be warned of the fact by pain, so that it may go to its assistance. For this would be to substitute a final for an efficient cause, and the difficulty would remain; for we should still have to ascertain the cause which brings it about, that, on the occasion of the body being wounded, the soul suffers in consequence, and experiences a particular kind of pain for a particular kind of wound.

IX. Further, to say, with certain philosophers, that the soul is the cause of the pain, because the pain is but the sadness which the soul feels when there takes place in the body which it loves some disturbance of which it is warned by the difficulty which it has in the exercise of its functions, is to neglect the inner feeling which we experience of what takes place in us. For every one feels unmistakably, when he is being bled, for example, or when he burns himself, that he is not the cause of the pain. He feels it against his own will, and he cannot doubt that it comes to him from an external cause. Again, the soul does not feel pain and a particular kind of pain because it has learnt that a disturbance is taking place in the brain, and a particular kind of disturbance. Nothing is more certain than this. Finally, pain and sadness are entirely different. Pain precedes the awareness of the evil, sadness follows it. Pain is not agreeable, but sadness sometimes pleases us so much that those who wish to banish it from our mind without freeing us at the same time from the evil which causes it grieve and irritate us just as if they disturbed our joy, because sadness is, in fact, a state of the soul which is most suitable for us when we suffer some evil or are deprived of some good, and the feeling which accompanies this state of mind is the most suitable we can have under the circumstances. Pain, then, is entirely different from sadness. Moreover, I think that the soul is not the cause of its

sadness ; and that the thought which we have of the loss of some good only produces this feeling in us in consequence of the natural and necessary movement which God unceasingly impresses upon us for our welfare. But let us return to the difficulties which you have regarding the action and the qualities of light.

X. Firstly, there is no metamorphosis. The disturbance that takes place in the brain cannot change into light or into colours. For as modifications of bodies are nothing but these bodies themselves determined in a particular manner, they cannot be transformed into modifications of mind. That is evident.

Secondly, you press the corner of your eye and you have a certain sensation. That is so because He who alone can act upon minds has established certain laws owing to which body and soul operate and suffer in reciprocal determination.[1]

Thirdly, when you press your eye you have a sensation of light, though there is present no luminous body, because it is by a pressure similar to that which your finger exerts upon your eye, and from there on your brain, that bodies which we call luminous operate upon those around them, and through the latter upon our eyes and our brains. All this takes place in consequence of natural laws. For it is one of the laws of the conjunction of soul and body in accordance with which God acts incessantly upon those two substances, that a particular pressure or a particular disturbance should be followed by a particular sensation.

Fourthly, you see the light which is a modification of your mind and which, therefore, can exist in it alone ; for there is a contradiction in the thought of a modification of a being existing where that being is not. You see it, I say, in the vast spaces which your mind does not fill, for the mind does not occupy space. Those spaces which you see are only intelligible spaces which do not occupy any place.[2] For the spaces which you see are quite different from the material spaces which you survey. One must nor confuse the ideas of things with the things themselves. Remember, that we do not see bodies in themselves, and that it is only through their ideas that they are visible. Often we can see what does not actually exist, a proof

[1] Cf. Dialogue XII.

[2] Cf. *Première Lettre touchant la Défense de M. Arnauld.*

positive that those things which we see are intelligible and quite different from those which we look at.

Fifthly and lastly, you see the light not on the side on which you press your eye but on the opposite side, because, the nerve being constructed and adapted to receive impressions from luminous bodies through the pupil of the eye and not otherwise, the pressure of your finger on the left produces the same effect on your eye as a luminous body on the right whose rays were to pass the pupil and the transparent part of the eye would produce. For in pressing the eye from without you are pressing the optic nerve from within against what is called the vitreous humour, which in turn offers some resistance. Thus, God makes you experience the light on the side on which you see it because He always follows the laws which He has established in order to keep His procedure perfectly uniform; God never performs miracles; He never acts according to particular volitions against His own laws, for the order does not demand or permit it. His action always bears the character of His attributes. It continues always the same, if what He owes to his immutability is of no smaller importance than what He owes to any other of His perfections—as I shall prove to you in the sequel. Herein, I think, lies the solution of your difficulties. I have recourse to God and His attributes in order to remove them. But God, Aristes, does not remain idle, with arms folded, as certain philosophers maintain. Certainly, if God still acts, you may ask: When will one be able to say that He is the cause of certain effects, if one is not permitted to have recourse to Him in the case of those effects which are general, which one sees clearly have no necessary or essential relation with their natural causes? Keep, however, what I have just told you clearly in your memory, my dear Aristes, give it a place there among all that you hold most precious. And although you may understand it quite well, allow me to repeat in a few words what is essential in it so that you may return to it without difficulty when you are in a position to meditate upon it.

XI. There is no necessary relation between the two substances of which we are composed. The modifications of our bodies cannot, by their own activity, change those of our minds. Nevertheless, the modifications of a certain part of the brain which I will not further determine are always followed by modifications or feelings of our soul; and this solely in consequence of the con-

tinual exercise of the laws of the union of these two substances,—that is to say, to speak more clearly, in consequence of the constant and ever effective will of the author of our being. There is no relation of causality between a body and a mind. What am I saying? That there is no relation between a mind and a body. I am saying more. There is no real relation between one body and another, between one mind and another. In a word, no created thing can act upon another by an activity which is its own. This I will prove to you presently.[1] But, at least, it is evident that a body, that extension, a purely passive substance, cannot operate by its own activity upon a mind, upon a being of another nature and infinitely more excellent than it. Thus, it is clear that, in the union of soul and body, there is no other bond than the efficacy of divine and immutable decrees, an efficacy never without its effects. God has then willed, and wills without ceasing, that the various disturbances of the brain shall always be followed by the various thoughts of the mind with which it is in union. And it is this constant and efficient will of the Creator which causes the union of these two substances. For there is no other nature, I mean no other natural laws, than the efficient volitions of the Omnipotent.

XII. Do not ask, Aristes, why God wills to unite minds to bodies. The fact is unquestionable, but the principal reasons for it hitherto have remained unknown to philosophy, and perhaps even religion does not teach us. There is, however, one reason which it may be well to offer to you. God apparently desired to give us, in respect to His Son, a victim which we could offer to Him. He desired to give us an opportunity of meriting by a kind of sacrifice and annihilation of self the possession of eternal happiness. This, assuredly, seems just and in conformity with the order of things. Now we are on our trial in our body. It is through it, as occasional cause, that we receive from God thousands upon thousands of different feelings which through the grace of Jesus Christ constitute the occasion of our merits. As I will prove to you presently, the general cause was in need of an occasional cause, in order that, although always acting in a uniform and constant manner, it should be able to produce in His work by very simple means, and according to laws which are always the same, an infinity of different effects. It is, however,

[1] Dialogue VIII.

by no means the case that God could find no other occasional causes than bodies, in order to give to His procedure that simplicity and uniformity which characterise it. There are, indeed, other such causes in the angelic nature. These blessed spirits are perhaps reciprocally to one another and to themselves, by means of the different movements of their will, the occasional cause of the action of God who enlightens them and governs them. But let us not speak of what is beyond us. This, however, I can say without fear, and it is absolutely necessary in order to make clear the subject of our discussion, and I beg of you to keep it well in mind so that you can meditate upon it at your leisure.

XIII. God loves order inviolably and by the necessity of His being. He loves, He esteems all things in proportion as they are worthy of esteem or love. He hates disorder necessarily. This is perhaps clearer and more indisputable than the proof I will give you some day,[1] and which I pass by at present. But it is obviously a violation of order, that a mind which is capable of knowing and loving God, and which is consequently made for this purpose, should be compelled to occupy itself with the needs of the body. Hence, as the soul is united to the body and is bound to interest itself in its preservation, it was necessary that it should be given warnings which are instinctive—I mean warnings which are prompt but convincing of the relation in which the bodies of our environment stand to those which we animate.

XIV. God alone is our light and the cause of our happiness. He possesses the perfections of all beings. He has the ideas of them all. He contains, therefore, in His wisdom all truths, speculative or practical; for all these truths are nothing but relations of magnitude and perfection which subsist between the ideas, as I will prove to you presently.[2] He alone, then, ought to be the object of attention of our mind, since He alone is capable of enlightening it and of regulating all its movements, since He alone is above us. Assuredly, a mind occupied with created things, turning its attention towards created things, however excellent they may be, is not in the order in which God requires it to be, nor in the state in which God has placed it. But, if we had to examine all the relations which the bodies of our environment have to

[1] Cf. Dialogue VIII. [2] Ibid.

a given position of our own, in order to discover whether and how and to what an extent we ought to have commerce with them, that would take up a good deal of our time, indeed, it would entirely usurp the capacity of the mind. And, assuredly, our body would not be the better for it. It would soon be destroyed in some unforeseen manner; for our wants change so often and sometimes so quickly that it would require a vigilance of which we are incapable not to be overtaken by some fatal accident. When would one think of eating, for example, or of what to eat or when to cease eating? How busy would a mind which guides and exercises its body be if it had to know, at every step which the body is made to take, that it is moving in a fluid air which cannot wound it or trouble it with cold or heat, wind or rain, or with some malignant or corrupt vapour; that there is not at each spot where the person wishes to place his foot a sharp or hard body capable of hurting him; that he must lower the head promptly to avoid a stone, and look after his equilibrium to prevent himself from falling! A man always occupied in this way with the whole mechanism of his body and with an infinity of objects in his environment could never think of the true goods, or at any rate could not think of the true goods as much as they demand or consequently as much as is their due, seeing that our mind is made and can only be made for the purpose of occupying itself with those goods which can illumine it or make it happy.

XV. Thus, it is evident that God, willing to conjoin minds with bodies, had to establish for an occasional cause of the confused awareness we have of the presence of objects and of their properties as in relation to us, not our attention which deserves clear and distinct knowledge, but the various disturbances in these same bodies. He had to give us distinct proofs not of the nature or properties of the things around us but of the relation in which they stand to us, so that we should be able to work successfully for the preservation of life without having to pay incessant attention to our needs. He had, so to speak, to undertake the task of warning us at the proper time and place, by means of anticipatory feelings, of all that concerns the good of the body, so as to give us full opportunity to occupy ourselves in the pursuit of the true goods. He had to give us curt warnings of all that concerns the body, so as to convince

us promptly, vivid proofs so as to determine us effectively, certain and irrefutable proofs so as to preserve us more surely; yet proofs which are confused, although indubitable, not of the relations which subsist between the objects themselves, in which relations the evidence of truth consists, but of the relations in which they stand to our body situated as it is at the time. I make the latter reservation because we find, for example, or ought to find, tepid water warm if we touch it with a cold hand, and cold if we touch it with a warm hand. We find it, or ought to find it, pleasant when thirsty; but when our thirst is quenched we find it tasteless and unpleasant. Let us admire, then, Aristes, the wisdom of the laws of the conjunction of soul and body; and, though all our senses should tell us that sense qualities are in the objects, let us attribute to corporeal things only what we see clearly belongs to them, after having consulted the ideas which represent them. For since the senses give us different accounts of the same things according to the interest which they have in them, since they invariably contradict themselves when the welfare of the body requires, we must regard them as false witnesses with reference to truth, but as faithful monitors so far as the preservation and the conveniences of life are concerned.

XVI. ARISTES. How moved I am by what you are telling me and how abashed at having been all my life the dupe of these false witnesses! But they speak with so much assurance and force that they bring, so to speak, conviction and certitude to our minds. They issue commands with so much haughtiness and alacrity that one yields without examination. How can one enter into oneself when they are calling upon us and luring us outward? How can one hear the deliverances of inner truth in the midst of the noise and the tumult which they cause? You have explained to me that light cannot be a modification of corporeal things. But as soon as I open my eyes I begin to doubt this truth. The sun which strikes my eyes dazzles me and disconcerts all my ideas. I understand now that if I pressed the point of this pin on my hand, all that it could do would be to make a small hole in it. Yet if I did so *really* it seems to me that it would give rise to much pain. I assuredly could not doubt this at the moment of the prick. What power and force the senses possess to lead us into error! What disorder, Theodore! And yet even in this disorder the wisdom of the Creator shines forth brilliantly. It was neces-

sary that light and colours should be spread over objects so that they could be distinguished without difficulty. It was necessary that fruits should be as though they possessed flavours in order that they should be eaten with pleasure. It was necessary that pain should penetrate to the pricked finger in order that the strength of the feeling should warn us to withdraw it. There is, then, an infinite wisdom in this order established by God. I agree, I cannot doubt it But at the same time I find a disorder which is very great and which seems to me unworthy of the wisdom and the goodness of our God. For, after all, for us unhappy creatures this order is a fruitful source of errors and the inevitable cause of the greatest evils of life. The tip of my finger is pricked, and I suffer, I am unhappy, I am incapable of thinking of the true good. My soul can attend to nothing but my injured finger and is entirely filled with pain. What a strange misfortune! A mind to depend upon a body and because of it to lose the sight of truth! To have one's attention divided, indeed to be more occupied with one's finger than with the real end of one's being! What disorder, Theodore! There is assuredly some mystery in all this. I beseech you to unravel it for me.

XVII. THEODORE. Yes, without a doubt there is some mystery in this. How much philosophers are indebted to religion, my dear Aristes, for it alone can help them out of the perplexity in which they find themselves! Everything in the procedure of God seems to be self-contradictory and nothing to be uniform any longer. Good and evil—I speak of physical evil—have not two different principles. It is the same God who gives rise to both by means of the same laws. But sin brings it about that God, without effecting any change in His laws, becomes for all sinners the just avenger of their crimes. I cannot tell you at present all that would be necessary in order to make the matter thoroughly clear. I will, however, state the solution of your difficulty in a few words.

God is wise. He judges all things well. He esteems them in exact proportion to the degree in which they are worthy of esteem. He loves them in proportion as they are worthy of love. In a word, God loves order invincibly. He follows it inviolably. He cannot belie Himself. He cannot sin. Now, minds are worthier than corporeal things, hence (observe this), though

God can conjoin minds and bodies, He cannot subject the former to the latter. That a prick should serve as a reminder and warning to me is just and conformable to order, but that it should afflict me and make me unhappy, that it should absorb me despite myself, that it should disconcert my ideas and hinder me from thinking of the truly good,—that certainly is a violation of order. Such a thing is unworthy of the wisdom and goodness of the Creator. This reason tells me quite clearly. Nevertheless, experience convinces me that my mind depends on my body. I suffer, I am unhappy, I am incapable of thought when I am pricked, of this there can be no doubt. We have, then, here a flagrant contradiction between the certainty of experience and the evidence of reason. See, however, the solution. The mind of man has lost its worth and its excellence in the eyes of God. We are no longer such as God originally made us. We are born in sin and corruption, deserving of the divine anger and totally unworthy of thinking of God, of loving Him, of adoring Him, of delighting in Him. He wills no longer to be our good and the cause of our happiness; and if He is still the cause of our being and does not annihilate us, it is because in His clemency He has given us a means of reparation through which we can have access to Him, intercourse with Him, community of true goods with Him, in accordance with the eternal decree by which He has resolved to reunite all things in our divine leader, the Man-God, predestined from all eternity to be the foundation, the architect, the victim and the sovereign Priest of the spiritual temple wherein the divine Majesty will dwell for evermore. Thus, reason disposes of this terrible contradiction which has disturbed you so much. It renders intelligible for us the sublimest truth. But this is because faith leads us to understanding, and because by its authority it changes our doubt and our uncertain and perplexing experiences into conviction and certitude.

XVIII. Hold fast then, Aristes, to the thought which reason has engendered within you, the thought, namely, that the infinitely perfect Being follows for ever an order immutable as its law, and that thus He can well conjoin that which is most noble with that which is least noble, the mind with the body, but that He cannot subject the former to the latter, that He cannot deprive it of liberty and of the exercise of its most excellent functions, that He cannot so absorb it as to prevent it, even by the most

cruel pains, losing sight of its supreme good for the vilest of created things. And conclude from all this that before the Fall there were exceptions favourable to man in the laws of the conjunction of soul and body. Or, rather, conclude from all this that there was a law, since abolished, according to which the will of man was the occasional cause of that arrangement of the brain in which the soul is immune from the action of objects, though the body be affected by them, and thus the soul was never interrupted, despite the body, in its meditation and ecstacy. Do you not feel in yourself some remnant of this power when you are deeply absorbed in anything and the light of truth penetrates you and delights you? Probably noise, colours, odours, or any other of the less pressing and less vivid sensations, are then hardly capable of interrupting you. Yet you are not above pain, you find it unpleasant despite all efforts of the mind. I speak of you, Aristes, relying on my own experiences. But in order to speak fairly of man when innocent and made in the image of God, we must consult the divine ideas of the immutable order of things. It is there that we can find the model of a perfect man such as our father, Adam, was before his sin. Our senses disconcert our ideas and tire our attention. But to Adam they spoke with respect. They became silent at the least sign. They did not even give him warning of the approach of certain objects if he wished it so. He could eat without pleasure, look without seeing, sleep without dreaming of all the vain phantoms that disconcert our minds or trouble our repose.[1] These are no paradoxes. Consult reason, and do not judge, on the basis of what you feel in a disorderly body, of the state of the first man in whom everything conformed to the immutable order which God follows inviolably. We are sinners, but I speak of man in his innocence. The order of things does not permit that the mind should be deprived of the liberty of its thoughts while the body recoups its strength during sleep. The righteous man thought, during this as well as during any other time, of whatsoever he wished. Since man, however, has become a sinner, he no longer deserves that on his account there should be any exceptions to the laws of nature. He deserves to be deprived of all power over an inferior nature, since he has through rebellion made himself the most despicable of creatures;

[1] Van-Helmont, *Imago Dei.*

he deserves not only to be reduced to nothing but to be brought to a state which for him would be worse than nothing.

XIX. Do not cease, then, to admire the wisdom and the wonderful order of the laws of the conjunction of soul and body, through which we have so many different sensations of the objects of our environment. They are very wise. Considering them in their original form, they were even advantageous for us in every sense; and it is right that they should remain after the Fall, though they have sad consequences, for the uniformity of God's action ought not to be dependent upon the irregularity of ours. But after man's rebellion it was not right that the body should be perfectly amenable to him. This ought not to be except in so far as it is necessary for the sinner to preserve his wretched life for some time and to perpetuate the human species until the consummation of the work in which posterity is to enter by the merits and the power of the coming Redeemer. For, all these generations which follow one another, all these lands which are peopled by idolaters, the whole natural order of the universe which is preserved, have being only in order to furnish to Jesus Christ an abundance of material necessary for the construction of the eternal temple. A day will come when the descendants of the most barbarous peoples will be enlightened by the light of the Gospel, and when they will enter as a host into the Church of the Elect. Our fathers died in idolatry, and we recognise the true God and our adorable Saviour. The arm of the Lord is not shortened. His power will extend to the most distant nations; and perhaps our descendants will relapse into darkness as the light illumines the new world. But let me recapitulate, Aristes, in a few words the principal things which I have told you, so that you may retain them without difficulty and make them the subject of your meditations.

XX. Man is made up of two substances, mind and body. Thus, there are two quite different kinds of goods to distinguish and to examine, those of the mind and those of the body. God has, moreover, given to man two very safe means for discerning these different goods, namely, reason for the goods of the mind, the senses for those of the body, clearness of light for the true goods, and a confused instinct for the false goods. I call the goods of the

body false goods or deceiving goods because they are not such as they appear to our senses; and, though they be good with reference to the preservation of life, they have not this power for good in consequence of their own nature but in consequence of the divine will or of the natural laws of which they are the occasional causes. I cannot now explain this further. But it was fit that the mind should sensuously perceive qualities to be in corporeal things, though these things do not really possess them, in order that it should not indeed love or fear them, but take them up or reject them according to the pressing needs of the machine, the delicate springs of which require a vigilant and prompt watch. In order that the mind should take interest in the preservation of the body, it was necessary that it should have a kind of reward for the service which it rendered to that body which God has required it to preserve. This is now the cause of our errors and prejudices. This is the cause which brings it about that, not content to take up certain corporeal things, and to withdraw from others, we are foolish enough to love or fear them. In a word, this is the cause of the corruption of our heart, all movements of which should be directed towards God, and of the blindness of our soul, the whole of whose thoughts should be engaged with nothing but light. If we are careful we may note that it is because we do not make of the means of which I have just spoken the use for which God has given them to us, and because instead of consulting our reason in order to discover truth, instead of listening only to the evidence which accompanies all clear ideas, we yield to a confused and deceiving instinct, reliable only so far as the goods of the body are concerned. Now this the first man did not do before his sin; for without a doubt he did not confuse the modifications of which the mind is capable with the modifications of extension. His ideas, then, were not confused, and his senses, being in perfect submission, did not hinder him from consulting reason.

XXI. At present the mind is punished just as it is rewarded through its connection with the body. If we are pricked, we suffer, however great an effort we make not to think of the matter. That is true; but, as I have said before, it is so because it is not right that there should be any exceptions to the laws of nature in favour of a rebel, or, rather, that we should have a power over our body which we do not deserve. Suffice it for us, that by

the grace of Jesus Christ, the troubles to which we are subject to-day will be to-morrow the means of our triumph and our glory. We are not sensible of the true goods. Meditation shocks us. We are not naturally moved by an anticipation of pleasure where that which perfects our minds is concerned. The true good deserves to be loved by reason alone. It should be loved with a love which is deliberate, with an enlightened love, and not with that blind love which instinct inspires. It surely deserves our application and our care. It has no need, as corporeal things have, of borrowed qualities, in order to make itself loved by those who know it perfectly; and if at present we have, in order to love it, to be reminded of spiritual delectation, it is because we are weak and corrupt, because lust leads us astray, and because in order to conquer it it is necessary that God should inspire us with desires which are altogether holy; it is so because, dragged down as we are towards the earth by a heavy weight, we need a counter-balancing weight to lift us towards heaven, if we are ever to regain the equilibrium of perfect freedom.

XXII. Let us, therefore, my dear Aristes, incessantly enter into ourselves, and endeavour to silence not only our senses but our imagination and our passions. I have spoken only of the senses, because it is from them that the imagination and the passions derive all the malignant influence and power which they have. Generally, all that comes to the mind through the body solely as a result of natural laws is for the body alone. We need not, therefore, give any attention to it. But let us follow the light of reason which ought to guide the judgments of our mind and regulate the movements of our heart. We must distinguish the soul from the body and the very different modifications of which these two substances are capable, and reflect often upon the wonderful order and wisdom of the general laws of their conjunction. It is by reflections of this kind that one obtains a knowledge of one's self and that one gets rid of an infinite number of prejudices. It is by their means that one learns to know man; and we have to live amongst men and with ourselves. It is by their means that the whole universe appears to our mind in the way it does, that it appears, I say, stripped of a thousand beauties which appertain to us alone, but with contrivances and movements which arouse admiration in us for the wisdom of their author. Lastly, it is, as we have

just seen, by their means that one recognises vividly not only the corruption of nature and the need of a Mediator—two great principles of our faith—but an infinity of other truths which are essential to religion and morality. Continue, then, Aristes, to meditate, as you have already begun to do, and you will see the truth of what I have told you. You will see that the profession of meditation ought to be that of all rational persons.

ARISTES. This word "meditation" troubles me, now that I partly understand what you have told me, and that I am so moved by it. Owing to the blind contempt that I had for reason, I thought, Theodore, that you were labouring under a kind of illusion, and I was bound to treat you and some of your friends as dreamers (*méditatifs*). I thought it was clever and witty to poke fun in that way; and I am sure you know quite well what is meant by that sort of thing. I assure you, nevertheless, that I did not wish this epithet to be applied to you; and that I have removed the bad effect of the term (*raillerie*) by means of eulogies which were earnest and which I have always believed to be true.

THEODORE. I am sure of it, Aristes. You have amused yourself a little at my expense. I am glad. But I think that to-day you will not be sorry to learn that this has cost you more than it has cost me. Do you know there was present in that company one of these "meditators," who as soon as you had gone felt himself obliged, not to defend me, but the honour of the universal Reason against whom you offended by trying to turn people against consulting it? At first when the "meditator" had spoken everybody rose to defend you. Yet, after he had endured some jokes and the contemptuous airs inspired by the imagination when in revolt against reason, he pleaded the cause of reason so well that imagination yielded. They did not jeer at you, Aristes. The "meditator" appeared grieved by your blindness. As to the others, they were somewhat moved by anger, so that if you are still of the same mind—you are far from being so—I should advise you not to go to Philander's to air your jokes and commonplaces against reason, in order to throw ridicule upon the taciturn "meditators."

ARISTES. Depend upon it, Theodore! I am glad to learn this news. The evil which I am afraid that I did was soon remedied. But to whom am I obliged for this favour? Is it not to Theotimus?

THEODORE. You will know as soon as I am quite convinced

that your love for the truth will be great enough to extend even to those to whom you owe this somewhat ambiguous obligation.

ARISTES. This obligation is not ambiguous. I protest that if it is Theotimus, I shall love him for it and esteem him for it all the more, since, the more I meditate upon the matter, the more I feel the growth of my inclination towards those who are in search of truth, those whom I called "meditators" when I was foolish enough to regard as dreamers those who give to reason the assiduity which is its due. Oblige me, therefore, by telling me who this good man is who wanted to spare me the confusion which I deserved and also upheld the honour of reason so well without throwing ridicule upon me. I should like to have him as a friend, I should like to earn his good graces, and if I cannot accomplish this, I should at least like him to know that I am no longer such as I was.

THEODORE. Very well, then, Aristes, he shall know it. And if you want to be among the number of the "meditators," I can promise that he will also be among the number of your good friends. Meditate, and all will be well. You will win him over soon when he sees in you some enthusiasm for truth, submission to faith, and a profound respect for our common Master.

FIFTH DIALOGUE

The function of the senses in the sciences—Our sensations contain a clear idea and a confused feeling—The idea does not belong to the sensation—It is the idea which enlightens the mind and the feeling which stimulates it and renders it attentive; for it is by means of feeling that the intelligible idea becomes sensible.

ARISTES. I have made great way since you left me, Theodore. I have discovered land. I have reviewed in a general manner all the objects of my senses, under the guidance, as it seems to me, of my reason alone. I have never been more surprised, though I have already become somewhat accustomed to these new discoveries. Good God! What poverty I recognised in what till a few days ago I thought finished excellence, but what wisdom, what grandeur, what wonderful features, in all that the world despises! The man who sees only with his eyes is indeed a stranger in his own country. He admires everything, and knows nothing, too happy if what startles him does not bring death with it. Perpetual illusions arise from the objects of sense, everything deceives us, everything poisons us, everything speaks to the soul only for the sake of the body. Reason alone obscures nothing. How pleased I am with it and with you for having taught me to consult it, for having lifted me above my senses and above myself, so as to contemplate its light! I have recognised very clearly, it seems to me, the truth of all that you have told me. Yes, Theodore, I am indeed pleased to tell you: the human mind is enveloped in darkness, its own modifications do not illumine it, its substance, spiritual though it be, has nothing intelligible in it, its senses, its imagination, its passions, lead it astray at every moment. To-day I believe I am in the position to assure you that I am fully convinced. I speak to you with the confidence which the sight of the truth gives me. Try me and see whether I am too bold in speaking after this fashion.

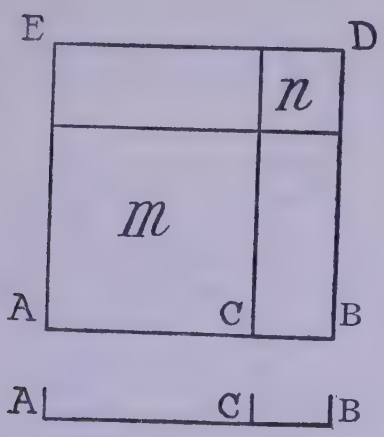
I. THEODORE. I believe what you are telling me, Aristes; for I feel sure that an hour's serious meditation is sufficient to lead a mind like yours a long way. Nevertheless, in order to give me greater assurance of the progress you have made, please answer me. You see this line A B. Let it be divided in two parts at the point C, or at any other point. I will prove to you that the square of the whole is equal to the squares of each of the parts, together with the two parallelograms formed on the two parts.

ARISTES. What are you establishing by this? Who does not know that to multiply a whole is the same as to multiply its parts?

THEODORE. You know it. But let us suppose you do not know it. I wish to make your eyes see the proof, and thus to show you that the senses are capable of making you see the truth clearly.

ARISTES. Let us see.

THEODORE. Look carefully. That is all I ask. Without entering into yourself to consult reason, you will discover an evident truth. A B D E is the square of A B. But the square equals all that it contains. It is equal to itself. Therefore it is equal to the two other squares on each of the parts *m* and *n*, and to the two parallelograms formed on the parts A C and C B.



ARISTES. This stares me in the face.

THEODORE. Very good. But, what is more, it is evident. Hence, there are evident truths which "stare you in the face." Thus, obviously, our senses do teach us truth.

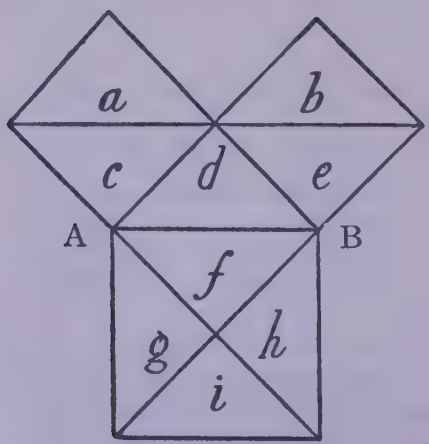
ARISTES. A beautiful truth this is indeed and so difficult to discover! Have you nothing but that to say in defence of the senses?

THEODORE. You do not answer, Aristes. It is not reason which inspires this evasion. For I ask you, is not that an evident truth which your senses have just taught you?

ARISTES. Nothing easier.

THEODORE. Because our senses are excellent teachers. They have easy ways of teaching the truth. Reason, on the other hand, with its clear ideas leaves us in the dark. This, Aristes, is what one would say to you. Prove to an ignorant man, one would say, that the square, for example, of 10 equals the squares of 4 and 6, plus twice the product of these numbers. These ideas of numbers are clear, and the truth to be proved is the same as if you were dealing with a line before you of a length of 10 inches which you divided into two parts of 4 and 6 inches respectively. Nevertheless, you see that there will be some difficulty in making it intelligible because this principle, that to multiply a number by itself is the same thing as to multiply all its parts separately by themselves, is not as clear as the principle that a square equals all the figures which it contains. And that is what your eyes teach you, as you have just seen.

II. But if in your opinion the theorem which your eyes have taught you is too easy, here is another which is more difficult. I am going to prove to you that the square on the diagonal of a square is double the squares on the sides. Open your eyes, that is all I ask you.



Look at the figures. Do not your eyes tell you that all these triangles, *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*, *e*, *f*, *g*, *h*, *i*, which I take to have and which you see have each of them a right angle and two lines equal, are equal to one another? But you see that the square described on the diagonal A B has four of these triangles, while the squares described on the sides have two. Therefore, the large square is double that of the others.

ARISTES. Yes, Theodore. But you are reasoning.

THEODORE. I am reasoning? I look and I see what I am telling you. I reason, if you like, but I do so on the basis of the faithful testimony of my senses. Only open your eyes and look at what I am showing you. This triangle *d* equals *e*, and *e* equals *b*, and on the other hand *d* equals *f* and *f* equals *g*. Hence, the small square equals half the large one. The same holds good with the other side. This stares one in the face, as you put it. To discover this truth it is sufficient to look carefully at the figure, and compare by the help of the movement of the eyes the parts of which it is made up. It follows that our senses are able to teach us the truth.

ARISTES. I deny this conclusion, Theodore. It is not the senses, but reason combined with the senses, which enlightens us and reveals the truth to us. Do you not think that in the sensuous view which we have of the figure there is involved at the same time the conjunction of the clear idea of extension with the confused feeling of the colour by which we are affected? Now, it is from the clear idea of extension, and not from the black and white which make it perceptible by the senses, that we discover the relations in which this truth consists, from the clear idea of extension, I say, which reason possesses, and not from the black and white, which are only sensations, or confused modifications of our senses, the relations of which it is impossible to discover. There is always present, on the one hand, a clear idea and, on the other hand, a confused feeling in the view which we have of sensible objects—an idea which represents their essence and the feeling which admonishes us of their existence—an idea which acquaints us with their nature, their properties, the relations which they have or may have to one another, in a word, a truth and a sensation, which latter makes us feel their difference and the bearing which they have upon the conveniences and preservation of life.

III. THEODORE. I see from your reply that you have covered much ground since yesterday. I am satisfied with you, Aristes. But, I ask you, is not this colour which you see upon the paper itself extended? Certainly, I see it as extended. Now, this being so, I shall be able clearly to discover the relations between its parts without thinking of the extension which reason contains. The extension of the colour will be sufficient for me, through my acquaintance with physics and geometry.

ARISTES. I deny, Theodore, that the colour is extended. We see it as extended, but our eyes deceive us, for the mind will never understand how extension can belong to colour. We see this whiteness as extended, but it is because we introduce it into extension owing to the fact that it is through this feeling on the part of the soul that we see the paper; or, rather, it is because intelligible extension touches the soul and modifies it in a certain way, and through this modification the intelligible extension becomes sensible to the soul. What, Theodore! Would you say that pain is extended because when one has gout or rheumatism one feels it as extended? Would you say that sound is extended because one hears it as filling the whole air? Would you say that light is extended over all those large spaces because they all look to us luminous? Since we are dealing here with modifications or feelings of the soul, and since the soul does not derive from its own resources the idea which it has of extension, all these qualities are introduced into extension and cause it to be felt by the soul, but they are in no way extended.

IV. THEODORE. I agree with you, Aristes, that colour, just like pain, is not locally extended. For since experience teaches us that one can feel pain in an arm which one has no longer, and that at night, when asleep, we see colours as extended over imaginary objects, it is evident that these are only feelings or sensations of the soul which certainly does not fill all the places which it sees, since it does not fill any at all, and since the modifications of a substance cannot be where the substance is not. This is beyond dispute. Pain cannot be locally extended in my arm nor colours over the surface of bodies. But why do you not think that they are, so to speak, sensibly extended —just as the idea of bodies, i.e. intelligible extension, is extended intelligibly? Why do you not think that the light which I see

when I press the corner of my eye, or otherwise, carries with it the sensible space which it occupies? Why do you think that it must be referred to intelligible extension? In a word, why do you think that it is the idea or archetype of bodies which touches the soul when it sees or feels the sensible qualities as diffused in bodies?

ARISTES. Because only the archetype of bodies can represent their nature, because only the universal Reason can enlighten me through the manifestation of its ideas. The substance of the soul has nothing in common with matter. The mind does not contain the perfections of all the entities which it can know. But there is nothing which does not participate in the Divine Being. God sees all things in Himself. The soul, on the other hand, cannot see all things in itself. It can only discover them in the divine and universal Reason. Hence, the extension which I feel and see does not belong to me. Else I could, in contemplating myself, know the works of God. I could, by considering my own modifications attentively, become acquainted with physics and several sciences which consist only in the knowledge of the relations of extension, as you know quite well. In a word, I should be a light unto myself, and I cannot think of that without a kind of horror. But, Theodore, kindly clear up the difficulty which you have put before me.

V. THEODORE. It is impossible to do this directly. For it would be necessary that the idea or archetype of the soul should be disclosed to us. We should, then, see clearly that pain, colour, taste and the other feelings or sensations, of the soul, have nothing in common with the extension which we feel is joined with them. We should see intuitively that there is as much difference between the extension which we see and the colour which renders it perceptible by us as between the numbers—for example, the infinite, or any other intelligible idea that you please—and the perception which we have of them; and we should see at the same time that our ideas are quite different from our perceptions or feelings—a truth which we can only discover by serious reflection and a long and difficult process of reasoning.

But, in order to prove to you indirectly that our feelings or sensations do not contain the idea of extension to which they are referred, let us suppose that you are looking at the colour of your hand, and that at the same time you feel some

pain; you would see the colour of your hand as extended, and at the same time you would feel the pain as extended Do you not agree?

ARISTES. Yes, Theodore, and even if I touched it I should still feel it as extended; and if I dipped it into warm or cold water I should feel the heat and cold as extended.

THEODORE. Observe, then. Pain is not colour, nor colour heat, nor heat cold. Now, the extension of the colour which you see when you look at your hand is the same as that of the pain, heat or cold which you might thus feel. Hence this extension belongs neither to the colour, the pain, nor to any other of your feelings. For you would feel as many different extensions as you had feelings, if our feelings were extended in themselves, as they appear to be, or if the coloured extension which we see were not merely a sensation of the soul, like colour, pain, or taste, as some of the Cartesians, who know quite well that we cannot see objects in themselves, imagine. It is, then, Aristes, a single and unique extension which affects us in different ways, which acts upon our soul and modifies it through colour, heat, pain, etc. But it is not the bodies which we see that affect us with these different feelings. For we often see bodies which do not exist. Moreover, it is evident that bodies cannot act upon the mind, modify or enlighten it, make it happy or unhappy by means of agreeable or disagreeable feelings. Neither does the soul act upon itself and modify itself by means of pain, colour, etc. This needs no proof after what has been said already. It is, then, the idea or archetype of bodies which affects us in different ways. I mean it is the intelligible substance of Reason which acts upon our minds through its omnipotent efficacy and which touches it and modifies it with colour, taste and pain, by aid of that within it which is representative of bodies.

It is, therefore, no matter for surprise, my dear Aristes, to find that you can learn some clear truths through the testimony of the senses. For though the substance of the soul be not intelligible to the soul itself, and its modifications cannot enlighten it, yet, because these modifications are joined to the intelligible extension which is the archetype of bodies, and render it sensible, they can reveal to us the relations between them—which relations constitute the truths of geometry and physics. But it is always true to say that the soul cannot be its own light, that its modi-

fications are but obscure, and that it can discover exact truths only in the ideas which the universal Reason contains.

VI. ARISTES. I think I understand what you are saying. Yet as it is abstract I shall meditate upon it at my leisure. It is not pain or colour in itself which teaches me the relations that subsist between bodies. I can discover these relations only in the idea of extension which represents them, and this idea, though joined to colour and pain, the feelings or sensations which render it sensible, is not a modification. This idea becomes sensible or makes itself felt only because the intelligible substance of Reason acts upon the soul and impresses upon it such and such a modification or feeling, and thereby reveals to it, so to speak, though in a confused way, that a certain body exists. For when ideas of bodies become sensible, we conclude that there are bodies which act upon us, whereas when these ideas are intelligible only, we naturally believe that there is nothing outside of us which is acting upon us. The reason of this is, it seems to me, that it depends upon ourselves whether we think of extension, while it does not depend upon ourselves whether we feel it. Since we feel extension despite ourselves there must be something other than ourselves which impresses this feeling upon us. Now, we believe that this other thing is nothing but what we actually feel. Whence we conclude that it is the bodies of our environment that cause in us the feelings or sensations which we have of them; but in this we are always mistaken. We do not doubt the existence of these bodies, and in this, too, we are often mistaken. But as we think of bodies and imagine them, whenever we will, we conclude that it is our volitions which are the true cause of the ideas which we have of them, and of the images which we form of them. And the inner feeling which we have of the actual effect of our attention confirms us in this false thought. Though God alone can act upon us and enlighten us, yet because His operation is not sensible, we attribute to the objects all that He performs within us without our aid, and we attribute to our own power whatever He performs within us in consequence of our volitions. What do you think, Theodore, of this reflection?

VII. THEODORE. It is very judicious, Aristes, and comes from a thinker. But let us return to the sensuous demonstration which

I gave you of the equality between the square of a diagonal of a square and the two squares of the sides. And let us observe that this demonstration derives its evidence and generality only from the general and clear idea of extension, from the straightness and equality of the lines, the angles, the triangles, and not from the white and black which renders all these sensible and particular without rendering them in themselves more intelligible or clearer. Note that it is evident from my demonstration that generally every square described on the diagonal of a square equals the two squares of the sides, but that it is by no means certain that this particular square which you see before your eyes is equal to the two others. For you are not even certain that what you see is a square, and that this particular line is straight, or that angle a right angle. The relations which your mind conceives between the magnitudes are not the same as the relations of these figures. Note, finally, that though our senses do not enlighten the mind by themselves, yet because they render sensible the ideas which we have of bodies, they rouse our attention, and in this way they lead us indirectly to apprehension of the truth. It follows that we ought to make use of our senses in the study of all the sciences which have for their subject matter the relations of extension, and not fear that they will lead us into error, providing that we strictly follow the rule only to judge of things by means of the ideas which represent them, and not by the sensations which we have of them, a rule of the highest importance, and one which we ought never to forget.

VIII. ARISTES. All this is profoundly true, Theodore, and so I have understood the matter ever since I have thought seriously about it.[1] Nothing is more certain than that our states of mind are obscure, that they do not enlighten the mind by themselves, and that we do not know clearly all that we feel most vividly. This square here is not such as I see it. It is not of the magnitude that I see. To you certainly it seems larger or smaller than to me. The colour which I see does not belong to it. Perhaps to you it appears to have another colour than it does to me. It is not properly this square which I see. I judge that it is traced on this paper, and it is not impossible that there is present here neither paper nor square, just as it is certain

[1] Cf. *Recherche*, Bk. I, and *Réponse au livre des vraies et des fausses Idées.*

that there is here no colour. But though my eyes give me so many false or doubtful reports concerning the figures described on this paper, all this is as nothing compared with the illusions of my other senses. The testimony furnished by the eyes very often comes near the truth. The sense of vision may aid the mind to discover it. It does not wholly conceal its object. In rousing my attention it leads me to understanding. But the other senses are so false that one is deluded when one trusts to their guidance. It is not, however, the case that our eyes are given to us for the purpose of discovering the exact truths of geometry and physics. They are given to us only to throw light upon all the movements of our body in relation to the bodies of our environment for the convenience and preservation of life; and, in order to preserve life, it is necessary that we should have some kind of knowledge, approximating somewhat to the truth, of sensible objects. It is for this purpose that we have, for example, a certain sensation of the size of a given body at a given distance. For if such a body were too far to be able to injure us, or if, being near, it were too small, we should not fail to lose sight of it. To our eyes it would be as non-existent, though it would still subsist for the mind, and though, so far as it is concerned, division could never annihilate it; because the relation of a very large body, but at a long distance, or of a body which is near, but too small to injure us, the relation, I say, of these bodies to ours is nil, or ought not to be perceived by the senses which speak and ought to speak only for the conservation of life. All this seems evident to me and in conformity with what has passed through my mind during the time of my meditation.

THEODORE. I see quite well, Aristes, that you have travelled very far into the land of truth, and through the communion which you have had with Reason you have acquired riches more precious and rare than those which are brought to us from the New World. You have found the source, and have drunk from it; and, behold, you are rich for ever, if only you do not leave it. You have no longer need either of me or of anyone else, having discovered the faithful Master who enlightens and enriches all those who are attached to Him.

ARISTES. What, Theodore! Do you wish to break up our discussions already? I know quite well that it is with the universal Reason that one must philosophise. But I do not know the way in which this must be done. Reason itself will

teach me. That is not impossible. Yet I cannot hope for this if I have not a faithful and vigilant monitor to guide and encourage me. Good-bye to philosophy if you abandon me, for left to myself I should be afraid of going astray. I shall soon take the replies which I make to myself for those of our common Master.

IX. THEODORE. I have no mind to leave you, my dear Aristes. For now that you meditate upon everything one tells you, I hope that you will prevent in me the evil which you fear would befall you. We have all of us need of each other, though we receive nothing from anyone. You have taken literally a word thrown out in honour of Reason. Yes, it is from it alone that we receive light. But it makes use of those to whom it communicates itself, for the purpose of recalling to itself its lost children and to bring them through their senses to intelligence. Do you not know, Aristes, that Reason itself has assumed bodily form in order to be accessible to all men, to strike the eyes and ears of those who can see and hear only through the senses? Men have seen with their eyes the Eternal Wisdom, the invisible God who dwells within them. They have touched with their hands, as the well-beloved disciple says, the Word that endows with life. The Inner Truth has assumed external form, in order to teach us, coarse and stupid as we are, in a sensible and palpable manner the eternal commands of the Divine Law—commands which it issues to us incessantly within us, but which we hear not, given up as we are to what is outward. Do you not know that these great truths which faith teaches us are deposited in the Church, and that we can learn them only through the visible authority which emanates from the incarnate Wisdom? It is, it is true, ever Inner Truth which teaches us. But it makes use of all possible means in order to bring us back to itself and to fill us with intelligence. Fear not, then, that I shall leave you. For I hope that it will make use of you for the purpose of preventing me from abandoning it, and from taking my own imagination and reveries for its divine oracles.

ARISTES. You do me a great honour. But I see I must accept it, since it rebounds to Reason, our common Master.

THEODORE. I do you the honour of believing you to be rational. This honour is a great one. For through Reason every man, when he consults it and follows it, becomes superior to all

created things. By it he judges and condemns. But do not suppose that I am yielding to you. Do not suppose either that I am raising myself above you. I yield only to Reason, which may perhaps speak to me through you, just as it speaks to you through my mediation. I raise myself only above the brutes, above those who abandon the most essential of their qualities. Nevertheless, my dear Aristes, though we are both of us rational, let us not forget that we are very liable to error because we can both of us come to a decision without waiting for the infallible judgment of the just judge, without waiting for the evidence to wring, so to speak, our consent from us. For if we always honoured Reason by letting it utter its decrees it would make us infallible. But instead of waiting for its deliverances, instead of following its light step by step, we anticipate it and go astray. Impulsive as we are, we are seized with impatience at having to remain attentive and immobile. Our wants press upon us and the enthusiasm which we have for the true good precipitates us frequently into the greatest evils. For we are free to follow the light of Reason or to grope in the dark under the false and deceiving gleam of our own states of mind. Nothing is more pleasant than to follow blindly the impressions of instinct. On the other hand, nothing is more difficult than to hold fast to the sublime and delicate ideas of truth despite the weight of the body which hinders the mind. Nevertheless, let us both try to sustain one another, my dear Aristes, without trusting each other too much. Perhaps our feet will not slip at the same time, provided we advance very gently and are as careful as possible not to lean on a poor support.

ARISTES. Let us advance a little, Theodore. What do you fear? Reason is an excellent support. There is no succession in clear ideas. They do not yield to time. They do not accommodate themselves to particular interests. They do not alter their deliverances like our states of mind, which speak for or against anything according as the body solicits them. I am fully convinced that we must follow the ideas which alone shed light, and that our feelings and other states of mind can never lead us to the truth. Let us proceed to some other matter, since I agree with you in regard to all this.

X. THEODORE. Let us not move so fast, my dear Aristes. I am afraid that you are granting me more than I ask, or that

you do not yet understand with sufficient distinctness what I am saying. Our senses deceive us, it is true, but that is mainly because we refer to sensible objects the feelings we have of them. Now, there are present in us several feelings which we do not refer to them. For example, the feeling of joy, sadness, hate, in a word, all the feelings which accompany the movements of the soul. The colour is not in the object, the pain is not in the body, the heat is neither in the fire nor in the body, to which, nevertheless, these feelings are referred. Our outer senses are false witnesses. Agreed. But the feelings of love and hate, joy and sorrow, are not referred to the objects of those feelings. They are felt in the soul, and there they are. They are, then, good witnesses, for they speak the truth.

ARISTES. Yes, Theodore, they speak the truth and the other feelings likewise. For when I feel pain, it is true that I feel it, it is true even in a sense that I suffer it through the action of the object which touches me. Here are some great truths! What then! Is it the case that the feelings of love, hate, and the other passions are not referred to the objects which are their occasion? Do they not shed their malignity upon them and represent them to us as other than they really are? As for me, when I have a feeling of aversion to anyone I feel inclined to interpret all that he does in an evil way. His innocent actions appear criminal. I persuade myself that I have good reasons for hating and despising him. For all my passions seek justification at the expense of him in whom they are centred. If my eyes shed different colours over the surface of bodies, my heart likewise transfers as much as possible its inner dispositions or certain false colours to the objects of its passions. I do not know, Theodore, whether the feelings of your heart give rise in you to the same effects as mine do in mine. But I can assure you that I am more afraid to listen to and follow them than to yield to the illusions, often innocent and helpful, of my senses.

XI. THEODORE. I am not saying, Aristes, that one should yield to the hidden impulses of one's passions, and am well pleased to see that you are aware of their power and malignity. But you must agree that they teach us certain truths. For, at any rate, it is true that I am experiencing much joy at present in listening to you. It is very true that the pleasure which I feel now is greater than the pleasure I had in our previous

conversations. I know, then, the difference between these two pleasures. And I do not know them in any other way than through the feeling that I have of them, through the modifications which my soul is undergoing—modifications which are, therefore, not so obscure that they do not teach me an indisputable truth.

ARISTES. Say if you like, Theodore, that you feel this difference between your modifications and your pleasures. But pray do not say that you *know* it. God knows it and does not feel it. But as for you, you feel it without knowing it. If you had a clear idea of your soul, if you could see its archetype, then you would know what you can now only feel, then you would know exactly the difference between the various feelings of joy which your kindness to me calls forth in your heart. Yet, assuredly, you do not know it. Compare, Theodore, the feeling of joy which you experience now with that of the other day, and tell me precisely the relation that subsists between them, and then I will believe you that your states of mind are known to you. For one knows things only when one knows the relations between them. You know that one pleasure is greater than another. But how much greater? We know that a square inscribed in a circle is smaller than the circle, but we do not on that account know the quadrature of the circle, for we do not know the relation of the circle to the square. We can approximate to it *ad infinitum* and see clearly that the difference between the circle and such other figure can be smaller than any given quantity. But note that we can do so because we have a clear idea of extension. For the difficulty which we have in discovering the relation of the circle to the square is due only to the smallness of our intellect; whereas it is the obscurity of our feelings and the darkness of our modifications which makes impossible the discovery of their relations. Were we endowed with the genius of the sublimest intellect, we could never, it is clear to me, discover the relations of our states of mind, if God did not reveal to us the archetype on the model of which He has made us. For you have convinced me that we can know beings and their modifications only by the eternal, immutable and necessary ideas which represent them.

XII. THEODORE. That is quite right, Aristes. Our senses and our passions can never enlighten us. But what say you about our imagination? The imagination forms such clear and distinct

images of the geometric figures that you cannot deny it is by the help of them that we cultivate this science.

ARISTES. Do you think, Theodore, that I have already forgotten what you have just told me or that I have not understood it? The certainty which characterises the reasoning of geometricians, the clearness of the lines and the figures which the imagination forms, are due solely to our ideas and not at all to our modifications, not at all to the confused traces which the flow of the animal spirits leaves behind it. When I imagine a figure, when I construct a building in my mind, I work on a foundation which does not belong to me. For it is from the clear idea of extension, from the archetype of bodies, that I derive all the intelligible materials which indicate my design to me, all the space which yields my ground-plot. It is out of this idea, furnished to me by Reason, that I form within my mind the body of my work, it is by aid of the ideas of equality and proportion that I fashion it and regulate it—reducing everything to that arbitrary unity which must be the common measure of all the parts of which it is composed, or at least of all the parts which can be viewed from the same point and at the same time. It is, assuredly, in accordance with intelligible ideas that we regulate the course of the animal spirits which traces these images or figures of our imagination. And all the clearness and certainty these figures possess does not proceed at all from the confused feeling which belongs to us, but from the intelligible reality which belongs to Reason. It does not come from the modification proper and peculiar to us; it is an effulgence from the luminous substance of our common master.

I am not able, Theodore, to imagine a square, for example, without at the same time conceiving it. And it seems to me evident that the image of this square which I form for myself is exact and regular only in so far as it corresponds precisely to the intelligible idea which I have of the square, i.e. of a space bounded by four lines exactly straight, entirely equal, and which when joined at their extremities have for their angles perfectly right angles. Now, it is of such a square that I am sure that the square of its diagonal equals the squares on the two sides. It is of such a square that I feel sure that the diagonal and the sides are incommensurable. In a word, it is of such a square that the properties can be discovered and be demonstrated to others.

On the other hand, one can know nothing through the confused and irregular image which the course of the animal spirits traces in the brain. The same is true of all the other figures. It follows that geometricians do not derive their knowledge from the confused images of their imagination, but solely from the clear ideas of Reason. These crude images may perhaps sustain their attention, giving bodily form, so to speak, to their ideas. But it is the ideas wherein they find sure foundation, which convince them of the truth of their science.

XIII. Do you want me, Theodore, to stop here in order to show you the illusions and phantoms of an imagination in revolt against Reason, sustained and animated by the passions—those alluring phantoms which mislead us, those terrible phantoms which inspire us with fear, monsters of whatsoever kind which owe their birth to our confusion, and which increase and multiply in a moment? Pure chimeras at bottom, but chimeras on which our mind feeds and with which it busies itself with the utmost eagerness. For our imagination finds more reality in the spectres to which it gives birth than in the necessary and immutable ideas of Eternal Truth. That is because these dangerous spectres affect it, while the ideas do not touch it. Of what avail can be a faculty so disorderly, a fool who likes to play the fool, a fickle one whom we find it so difficult to keep to the point, an insolent one who does not fear to interrupt in our most serious communions with Reason? I admit, nevertheless, that our imagination can make the mind attentive. For it has so much charm for it and sway over it that it can make it think willingly about whatever affects it. But, apart from the fact that it can have relation only to ideas which represent bodies, it is so subject to illusion, and so impetuous, that if not constantly checked in its movements and tricks and not controlled, it will lead you in an instant into the land of chimeras.

THEODORE. That is quite sufficient, Aristes. I see quite well that you understand sufficiently that Reason alone enlightens us by means of the intelligible ideas which it contains in its all-luminous substance, and that you are perfectly able to distinguish its clear ideas from our dark and obscure modifications. I advise you, nevertheless, to meditate often upon this matter in order to master it so perfectly, and to make yourself so familiar with the principles and consequences that follow from it, that

you will never by inadvertence take the vivacity of your feelings for the evidence of truth. For it is not enough to have realised that the general principle underlying our prejudices is that we do not distinguish between knowing and feeling, and that instead of judging of things by the ideas which represent them, we judge of them by the feelings which we have of them. It is necessary to fortify ourselves in this fundamental truth by following it out to its consequences. Practical principles are never perfectly understood until they are made use of in actual application. Try, then, by means of continuous and serious thought to acquire a strong and blissful habit of being on guard against the surprises and hidden impulses of your false and deceiving states of mind. There is no task more worthy of a philosopher. For, if we distinguish carefully the deliverances of Inner Truth from that which we say to ourselves; if we distinguish that which comes immediately from Reason from all that comes to us through the body or is occasioned by the body; that which is immutable, eternal, necessary from that which changes at all moments—in a word, the evidence of the light from the vivacity of instinct, it is hardly possible that we should fall into error.

ARISTES. I understand quite well all that you are telling me. And I have found so much satisfaction in the reflection I have already spent on this subject, that you need be under no apprehension that I shall not think of it again. Let us pass on to some other matter, if you think fit.

THEODORE. It is too late, Aristes, to enter at present into a long discussion. But in which direction do you wish that we should turn to-morrow? Please think about it and tell me.

ARISTES. It is for you to lead me.

THEODORE. Not at all; it is for you to make a choice. It should not be a matter of indifference to you which way I am leading you. May it not be that I am deceiving you? May it not be that I shall lead you whither you ought not to go? Most men, my dear Aristes, busy themselves imprudently with useless studies. It is enough for certain people to hear chemistry, astronomy, or any other vain and little wanted science praised, to throw themselves headlong into it. One person will not know whether the soul is immortal, he will perhaps be at a loss to prove the existence of God, yet he will solve the most complex algebraic equation for you with a surprising facility. Another will know all the refinements of language, all the rules of gram-

marians, and will never have meditated upon the command of duty. What perversity of mind! An arrogant imagination bestows passionate praise upon the knowledge of medallions, the poetry of Italians, the language of the Arabs and Persians, in the hearing of a young man full of enthusiasm for science. This will be sufficient to lead him blindly into this kind of studies; he will neglect the study of man, the rules of morality, and perhaps he will forget what is taught to children in their catechism. Man is a machine which goes as it is impelled. Chance rather than reason is man's guide. Everybody lives by opinion. Everybody is guided by imitation. Men even claim credit for following those who are in the front without knowing whither. Reflect upon the various studies of your friends, or rather review in your mind the direction you have followed in your own studies, and see whether you were right in doing what the others did. Judge your conduct not by the applause which you have received but by the decisive deliverances of Inner Truth; judge it by the Eternal Law, the Immutable Order regardless of the foolish thoughts of men. What, Aristes! because everybody devotes himself to trifling matters each in his way and according to his taste, is it necessary to follow them for fear of being taken for a philosopher by some fools? Is it even necessary everywhere to follow the philosophers, even in their abstractions and chimeras, for fear that they will look upon us as ignorant or as novices? Everything should be put in its proper place. Preference should be given to the sciences which deserve it. We ought to learn what we ought to know, and not allow our head to be filled with useless matter, however attractive it may appear, when we are lacking in what is essential to us. Think of this, Aristes, and you will tell me to-morrow what the subject of our discussion ought to be. We have had enough for to-day.

ARISTES. It is much better that you should tell me yourself.

THEODORE. It is infinitely better that it should be Reason which should tell us both. Consult it seriously, and I for my part will think of the matter too.

SIXTH DIALOGUE

Proofs of the existence of bodies, based on revelation—Two kinds of revelation—Explanation of the fact that the natural revelations of the sensations are a source of error.

ARISTES. What a difficult question you have given me to solve, Theodore! I was indeed right when I said that it was for you who know the strong and the weak side of the sciences, the utility and fruitfulness of their principles, to regulate my procedure in this intelligible world, whither you have transported me. For I confess I do not know in which direction to turn. What you have taught me will no doubt be of use in preventing me from going astray in this unknown country. For this purpose I have but to follow the light, step by step, and to yield only to the evidence which accompanies clear ideas. But it is not enough merely to move onwards, it is incumbent on us to know whither we are going. It is not enough to keep on discovering new truths incessantly, it is incumbent upon us to know where those fruitful truths are to be found which bestow upon the mind all the perfection of which it is at the moment capable,—those truths which are to regulate the judgment which we ought to have concerning God and His wonderful works, which are to regulate the movements of our hearts and give us a taste, or at least a foretaste, of the supreme good which we desire.

If in choosing a science one had to consider only its demonstrativeness without thinking of its utility, arithmetic would be preferable to all the sciences. The truths of numbers are the clearest of all, since all other relations are known clearly only in so far as they can be expressed by those common measures of all exact relations which are commensurable by unity. And this science is so fruitful and profound that if I were to spend ten thousand centuries in fathoming its depths I should at the end of that time still find an inexhaustible

store of clear and luminous ideas. Nevertheless, I do not think that you will find it quite to the purpose that we should turn in that direction, charmed by the certainty which meets us there on all sides. For, after all, of what avail would it be to us to penetrate into the most hidden mysteries of arithmetic and algebra? It is not enough to traverse many countries, to advance very far into waste lands, to discover places where no man has ever been; we ought to go straight into those prosperous countries where we can find fruit in abundance, and solid viands capable of nourishing us. When I compared the various sciences with one another according to my light, their various advantages whether as regards their demonstrativeness or utility, I found myself greatly embarrassed. Now the fear of falling into error made me give preference to the exact sciences such as arithmetic and geometry, the demonstrativeness of which satisfy in an admirable way our vain curiosity. Now the desire to know not the relations of ideas to one another but the relations which subsist between them and the works of God in the midst of which we live, attracted me to physics, ethics and the other sciences which frequently depend upon experience and phenomena uncertain enough. It is strange, Theodore, that the most useful sciences should be full of impenetrable obscurity, and that on the other hand the path should be sure, easy and smooth in those sciences which are not so necessary. Now, please tell me what method is there which would enable us to estimate fairly the relation between the facility of some and the utility of others, so as to give the preference to the science which deserves it? Moreover, how can we be sure that those which seem the most useful are so in truth, and that those which appear to be merely certain do not possess an important use of which we are not aware? I confess, Theodore, that though I have thought a good deal about the matter, I do not yet know what decision to arrive at.

I. THEODORE. You have not wasted your time, my dear Aristes, in your reflections upon the subject. For though you do not know precisely to what to apply yourself, I am already well assured that you will not devote yourself to a number of false studies on which more than half the world is seriously engaged. I am quite certain that if I committed a mistake

in the choice which I made as to the subject of our future discussions, you would be in a position to correct me. When men lift up their head and look in all directions, they do not always follow those who are in front of them. They follow them only when they are going whither it is necessary for them or whither they wish themselves to go. And when the leader of the group imprudently enters upon routes which are dangerous and which lead nowhere, the others will make him come back. Continue, therefore, your reflections upon your future steps and mine. Do not trust me too much. Watch carefully whether I am leading you where both of us ought to go. Observe, then, Aristes. There are sciences of two kinds. On the one hand, there are those which deal with relations of ideas; on the other, those which deal with relations of things by the aid of their ideas. The former are evident in every way. The latter cannot be evident unless we suppose that things resemble the ideas which we have of them, and in accordance with which we reason of them. These latter sciences are very useful, but they are enveloped in great obscurity, because they presuppose facts the truth of which it is very difficult to know exactly. But if we could find some method for assuring ourselves of the correctness of our assumptions, we should be able to avoid error, and at the same time to discover the truths which concern us very closely. For, once more, truths or relations of ideas to one another only concern us when they represent relations between things which have some connection with us.

Thus it is evident, it seems to me, that the best use that we can make of our mind is to ascertain what are the things which have some connection with us, the difference in kind among these connections, their causes, their effects; all in conformity with clear ideas and indisputable experiences, the former of which assure us of the nature and properties of things, and the latter of their relations to and connection with ourselves. But, in order not to waste our energies in trifles and useless things, our examination should be directed towards that which can make us happy and perfect. Thus, in a nutshell, it seems to me evident that the best use which we can make of our mind is to endeavour to gain an understanding of the truths which we believe by faith and of all that goes to confirm them. For there is no comparison between the utility of these truths and

the advantages which can accrue to us from the knowledge of other truths. We believe these great truths. That I grant. But faith does not exempt those who are capable of it from filling their mind with these truths and from becoming convinced of them in every possible way. For, on the contrary, faith is given to us that we should regulate in accordance with it the procedure of our intellect as well as the movements of our heart. It is given to us for the purpose of leading us to an understanding of those very truths which it teaches us. There are so many people who scandalise the faithful by an extreme metaphysic and insolently demand from us proofs of that which they ought to believe on the infallible authority of the Church, that, although the strength of your faith renders you unassailable, your charity ought to lead you to remedy the disorder and confusion which they cause everywhere. Do you approve then, Aristes, of the plan which I propose for our future discussions ?

ARISTES. Certainly I do. But I did not think that you would wish to abandon metaphysics. Had I thought that, I should, it seems to me, have solved the question as to which sciences should be preferred. For it is clear that no discovery can bear comparison with an understanding of the truths of faith. I thought that all that you wanted was to make something of a philosopher and a good metaphysician of me.

II. THEODORE. That is quite true, and I have no desire to abandon metaphysics, though in the sequel I shall perhaps take the liberty of going a little beyond its usual limits. This general science has authority over all the others. It may perhaps obtain illustrations from them and a little detail which is necessary in order to render its general principles perceptible by the senses. For by metaphysics I do not mean those abstract arguments about some imaginary properties, the main use of which is to furnish to those who are fond of disputation subject matter for endless arguments. I understand by this science the general truths which can serve as principles for the particular sciences.

I am convinced, Aristes, that one must be a good philosopher in order to gain an understanding of the truths of faith, and the more mastery one has over the true principles of metaphysics the firmer will one be in the truths of religion. I

assume, as very likely you see, what is necessary in order to render this proposition acceptable. But no, I shall never believe that true philosophy is opposed to faith and that good philosophers can have different opinions from good Christians. For whether it be that Jesus Christ in his divinity speaks to philosophers in their innermost being, or whether it be that he instructs Christians by aid of the visible authority of the Church, it is not possible that he should contradict himself, though it is quite possible to imagine contradictions in his deliverances or to take what really are our own decisions for his deliverances. Truth speaks to us in different ways, but certainly it always says the same thing. Philosophy, then, should not be opposed to religion—unless it be the false philosophy of the Pagans, the philosophy which is based on human authority, in a word, all those non-revealed opinions which do not bear the character of truth—that irresistible certainty which compels all attentive minds to submission. You can see from the metaphysical conclusions which we have reached in our preceding discussions whether true philosophy contradicts religion. For my part, I am convinced that it does not. For, if I had submitted to you any proposition contrary to the truths which Jesus Christ teaches us through the visible authority of the Church, those propositions, coming as they would be from my own resources, and not being characterised by irresistible certainty, would not belong at all to a true and sound philosophy. But I do not know why I delay to speak of truths which it is impossible to doubt, however small the amount of consideration we give to them.

ARISTES. Permit me to tell you, Theodore, that I was charmed to find a wonderful connection between what you have taught me, or rather between what Reason has taught me through your mediation, and those great and necessary truths, belief in which the authority of the Church enjoins upon the simple and the ignorant, whom God desires to save just as well as the philosophers. You have, for example, convinced me of the corruption of my nature and the need of a Saviour. I know that all intelligent minds have but a single and unique Master, the divine Word, and that only Reason incarnate and rendered sensible can deliver carnal men from the blindness into which we are all born. I confess with extreme satisfaction that these fundamental truths of our faith, and several others which it

would take too long to relate, are necessary consequences from the principles which you have demonstrated to me. Pray continue; I shall try to follow you whithersoever you lead me.

THEODORE. Ah, my dear Aristes, be careful once again lest I go astray. I am afraid you are too easily convinced, and that your approbation will encourage some negligence on my part and cause me to fall into error. Pray fear for me and mistrust all that a man, who may be subject to illusion, is telling you. Moreover, you will learn nothing if your reflections do not put you in possession of the truths which I shall try to demonstrate to you.

III. There are only three kinds of being of which we have any knowledge and with which we can have any connection: God or the infinitely perfect Being, who is the principle or cause of all things; minds which we know only by the inner feeling which we have of our own nature; bodies of the existence of which we are assured by the revelation which we have of them. For what we call a man is but a complex. . . .

ARISTES. Gently, Theodore. I know that there is a God or an infinitely perfect Being.[1] For if I think of Him, and certainly I do think of Him, it follows that He exists, since nothing finite can represent the Infinite. I know likewise that minds exist, granted that there are beings who resemble myself, for I cannot doubt but that I think and I know that whatever thinks is other than extension or matter.[2] You have demonstrated all this. But what do you mean when you say that we are assured of the existence of bodies by the revelation which we have of them? What! Do we not see them, do we not feel them? We have no need of a revelation to teach us that we have a body; when we are pricked, we feel it quite sufficiently.

THEODORE. Yes, no doubt we feel it. But the feeling of pain which we have is a kind of revelation. This expression is a striking one. But it is precisely for that reason that I make use of it. For you always forget that it is God alone who produces in your soul all those different feelings which it experiences, on the occasion of the changes which take place

[1] Dialogue II. [2] Dialogue I.

in your body, in consequence of the general laws of the conjunction of the two natures of which man is constituted; laws which are nothing but the efficient and constant volitions of the Creator, as I shall explain in the sequel. The point through which our hand is pricked does not cause the pain through the hole which it makes in the body. Neither is it the soul which produces this uncomfortable feeling, since it suffers the pain despite itself. It is produced assuredly by a superior power. It is God Himself, who through the feelings with which He affects us reveals to us all that takes place outside us, I mean in our body and in the bodies of our environment. Remember, please, what I have already said so many times.

IV. ARISTES. I was wrong, Theodore. But what you are telling me has suggested to my mind a very strange thought. I hardly dare to submit it to you, for I fear you will look upon me as a dreamer. I am beginning now to doubt whether there are any bodies. My reason is that the revelation which God gives us of their existence is not certain. For, after all, it is certain that we frequently see bodies which really do not exist, as for example during sleep, or when a fever causes an excitement in the brain. If God, in consequence of the general laws, as you call them, can sometimes give us deceptive sensations, if He can reveal false things to us through our senses, why should He not do so always, and how can we distinguish what is true from what is false in the obscure and confused testimony of our senses? It seems to me that I had better prudently reserve my judgment with regard to the existence of bodies. I will ask you kindly to give me an exact demonstration of it.

THEODORE. An exact demonstration! That is a little too much, Aristes. It seems to me, on the contrary, that I have an exact demonstration of the impossibility of such a demonstration. But keep up your courage, do not despair. Proofs are not lacking which are sufficient to dispel your doubt. And I am glad that such a doubt occurred to you. For, after all, to doubt the existence of bodies on the strength of reasons which show that one cannot doubt the existence of God or the incorporeal nature of the soul is some proof that one has put oneself above all prejudices, and instead of subjecting reason to the senses as most men do, one has recognised

the right which it has to pronounce judgment authoritatively. That it is impossible to give an exact demonstration of the existence of bodies I can prove conclusively, unless I am much mistaken, thus:—

V. The notion of the infinitely perfect Being involves no necessary relation to any created thing. God is perfectly self-sufficient. Matter is, therefore, no necessary emanation from the Divinity. At least—and this is sufficient for the present purpose—it is not evident that it is such a necessary emanation. Now, one can give no exact demonstration of a truth unless one can show that it is necessarily connected with its principle, unless one can show that there is a necessary relation involved in the ideas which are being compared. Hence it is not possible to demonstrate rigorously that bodies exist.

In fact, the existence of bodies is arbitrary. If any exist, it is because God has willed to create them. Now, it is not the same in the case of the volition to create the world as it is in the case of that to punish sins, reward good deeds, exact from all of us love and fear, and the like. These latter volitions of God and a thousand other similar ones are necessarily contained in the divine Reason, in that substantial Law which is the inviolable rule of the will of the infinitely perfect Being and generally of all intelligent minds. The will to create corporeal things, on the other hand, is not necessarily involved in the notion of the infinitely perfect Being, the Being that is perfectly self-sufficient. Far from being so, this notion seems to exclude such a volition from God. There is, then, no other way than revelation to assure us that God has willed to create corporeal things, admitting at the same time, what you do not doubt, that they are not visible in themselves, that they cannot act upon the mind nor represent themselves to it, and that our mind itself can know them only through the ideas which represent them, and feel them only through the modifications or sensations of which they can be the cause only in consequence of the arbitrary laws of the conjunction of the soul and the body.

VI. ARISTES. I quite understand, Theodore, that one cannot deduce demonstratively the existence of bodies from the notion

of the infinitely perfect Being, and that He is self-sufficient. For the volitions of God which have reference to the world are not involved in the notion which we have of Him. Now, since there is nothing apart from these volitions which could give being to these created things, it is clear that no demonstration can be offered of the existence of bodies, for demonstrations can be given only of those truths which are necessarily connected with their principle. Thus, since one cannot assure oneself of the existence of bodies by means of a clear proof, there is no other way left than the authority of a revelation. But this way does not seem to me certain. For though I find clearly in the idea of the most perfect Being that He cannot wish to deceive us, experience teaches me that His revelations are deceptive: two truths which I cannot reconcile with one another. For, after all, we often have feelings which reveal false things to us. One person feels pain in an arm which he has no longer. All those whom we designate "mad" see in front of them objects which do not exist, and there is hardly a person who has not in his life been frequently disturbed and frightened by pure phantoms. God is no deceiver. He cannot wish to deceive anyone, whether fools or wise men. But, nevertheless, we are all of us deceived by the feelings which He causes in us, and by means of which He informs us of the existence of corporeal things. It is then quite certain that we are often deceived. On the other hand, it seems no less certain that we are not always deceived. Let us see, then, upon what foundation you rest the certainty which you claim to have of the existence of corporeal things.

VII. THEODORE. There are in general revelations of two kinds: on the one hand natural, and on the other supernatural. I mean that the former take place in consequence of some general laws which are known to us in accordance with which the author of nature acts upon our mind on the occasion of certain occurrences in our body, and the latter take place in accordance with laws which are unknown to us, or in accordance with particular volitions added to the general laws for the purpose of remedying the grievous effects which they have produced owing to the Fall, which has put everything in disorder. Now, both the former and the latter revelations, the natural and the supernatural, are true in themselves. But the former are for us now

a source of error, not because they are false in themselves but because we do not use them for the purpose for which they were given to us, and because the Fall has corrupted our nature and put a kind of contradiction in the relation in which these general laws stand to us. Certainly, the general laws of the conjunction of soul and body, in consequence of which, God reveals to us that we have a body and that we are placed in the midst of many others, have been very wisely established. Remember what we have said in our previous discussions. General laws are not deceptive in themselves or as they were instituted, if we consider their character before the Fall and in the designs of their author. For we ought to remember that before the Fall, before the blindness and confusion which the revolt of his body produced in his mind, man knew clearly by the light of reason—

1. That God alone could act upon him, render him happy or unhappy by means of pleasure or pain—in a word, modify or affect him.

2. He knew by experience that God affected him always in the same way under the same circumstances.

3. He recognised, therefore, by experience as well as by the light of Reason that God's action was and was bound to be uniform.

4. Thus, he was determined to believe that there were entities which were the occasional causes of the general laws in accordance with which he felt that God acted upon him—for again he knew that God alone acted upon him.

5. Whenever he wished he could stop himself from experiencing the action of sensible objects.

6. The inner feeling which he had of his own volitions and of the respectful and submissive action of these objects taught him then that they were inferior, since they were all subordinate to him, for at that time everything was in perfect order.

7. Thus, consulting the clear idea conjoined with the inner feeling by which he was moved on the occasion of these objects, he saw clearly that they were only corporeal things, since this idea only represents corporeal things.

8. He concluded, therefore, that the different feelings wherewith God affected him were but revelations by the aid of which God taught him that he had a body and that he was surrounded by a multiplicity of other bodies.

9. But knowing through his reason that God's mode of operation was bound to be uniform, and through experience that the laws of the conjunction of body and soul were always the same, realising that the laws were established only for the purpose of warning him of what he ought to do for the conservation of his life, he discovered easily that he ought not to judge of the nature of bodies by the feeling which he had of them, nor of their existence by those same feelings except when his brain was stimulated by a cause from without and not by a movement of the animal spirits excited from within. Thus, he was able to recognise when an extraneous cause produced actual traces in his brain, because the course of the animal spirits was in perfect submission to his will. Thus, unlike the mad or fevered or ourselves during sleep, he was not liable to take phantoms for realities. All this seems to me evident and to follow naturally from two indisputable truths: first, that man before the Fall had very clear ideas and that his mind was free from prejudice; second, that his body and at least the main part of his brain were in a state of perfect submission to himself.

So much being granted, you see quite well, Aristes, that the general laws, in consequence of which God gives us these feelings or natural revelations, which assure us of the existence of bodies and of their relation to us, are very wisely laid down; you see that these revelations are not at all deceptive in themselves. They could not have been better designed for the reasons which I have just given. How is it, then, that now they are conducive to an infinite number of errors? Assuredly, because our mind is obscured, because from our childhood we are filled with prejudices, because we do not know how to use our senses for the purpose for which they were given to us. And all this is so, you must note, precisely because through our own fault we have lost the power which we ought to have over our brain. Our union with the universal Reason is extremely weakened through our dependence upon our body. For our mind is so placed between God, who enlightens us, and the body which blinds us, that it necessarily follows that the closer the union which it has with the one, the weaker will be its union with the other. As God follows and is bound to follow strictly the laws which He has established for the union of the two natures of which we are composed, and as we have lost the power of restraining the traces which the rebellious animal spirits cause in

the brain, we take these phantoms for realities. But the cause of our error is not due exactly to the falsity of our natural revelations but to the imprudence and recklessness of our judgments, to our ignorance of the way in which God is bound to act, to the disorder, in a word, which sin has caused in all our faculties and to the confusion into which it has thrown our ideas, not by changing the laws of the conjunction of soul and body, but by stirring up the powers of our body and by depriving us through its revolt of the facility to use these laws for the purpose for which they were established. You will understand all this more clearly in our future discussions or when you have meditated upon the matter. Meanwhile, Aristes, despite all that I have just said, I do not see that there can be any good reason for doubting the existence of bodies in general. For though I may be mistaken with regard to the existence of a particular body, I see quite well that this is because God follows strictly the laws of the conjunction of soul and body; I see that it is because the uniformity of His mode of operation cannot be broken through the irregularity of ours, and because the loss which we have sustained through our own fault of the power which we had over our body cannot be supposed to bring about any change in the laws of its union with our soul. This reason is sufficient to prevent my being mistaken with regard to the existence of such a body. I am inevitably led to believe that it exists. But this reason is wanting, and I do not see any possibility of finding another, that would prevent me from believing in general that there are bodies, despite all the different feelings which I have of them—feelings which are so consistent and well connected, so well arranged, that it seems to me certain that God would be deceiving us if nothing of what we see really existed.

VIII. But, in order to deliver us entirely from our speculative doubt, Faith furnishes us with a proof which it is impossible to resist. For whether bodies exist or not, it is certain that we see them, and that God alone can give us the sensations which we have of them. It is, therefore, God who is presenting to my mind the appearances of the men with whom I live, of the books which I study, of the preachers that I hear. Now, I read in the appearance of the New Testament about the miracles of a Man-God, His resurrection, His ascension to Heaven, the

preaching of the Apostles, its beneficial success, the establishment of the Church. I compare all this with what I know from history, with the laws of the Jews, with the prophecies of the Old Testament. These are still but appearances. But now I am certain that it is God alone who gives them to me, and that He is no deceiver. Again, therefore, I compare all the appearances which I have just enumerated with the idea of God, the beauty of religion, the sanctity of morality, the necessity of a creed, and finally I am induced to believe in what our faith teaches us. In a word, I believe in it without insisting upon a rigorously demonstrative proof. For nothing seems to me more unreasonable than infidelity, nothing more imprudent than not to yield to the greatest authority one can have in matters which we cannot examine with geometrical precision, whether because time is wanting or because of a thousand other reasons. Men have need of an authority to teach them necessary truths—truths which are to lead them to their true end, and to reject the authority of the Church would be to defy Providence. This seems to me evident, and I shall prove it in the sequel. Now, our faith teaches me that God has created the heavens and the earth. It teaches me that Scripture is a divine book, and this book, or the appearance of this book, tells me clearly and positively that there are thousands upon thousands of created things. Thus, then, are all my appearances changed into realities. Bodies exist, this is rigorously demonstrated, faith being granted. Thus, I am assured that bodies exist not only by the natural revelations of the sensations which God gives me of them, but still more by the supernatural revelation of faith. These then, my dear Aristes, are some great arguments against a doubt which hardly occurs to the mind in a natural way. There are few people sufficiently philosophical to suggest it. And though one can raise difficulties in regard to the existence of bodies, which appear to be insurmountable, especially to those who do not know that God is bound to act upon us in accordance with general laws, I do not believe that anybody could ever seriously doubt their existence. It was not, therefore, very necessary for us to stop at this point in order to dispel a doubt which is fraught with so little danger. For I am quite certain that you yourself have no need of all that I have just told you in order to be assured that you are at present with Theodore.

ARISTES. I am not so very sure of this. I am certain that you are here. But that is because you are telling me things which no other man would tell me, and which I should never say to myself. For the rest, the love which I have for Theodore is such that I seek him everywhere. How do I know whether if this love grows stronger, though that seems hardly possible, I shall always be able to distinguish between the true and false Theodore?

THEODORE. You are not wise, my dear Aristes. Will you never abandon this habit of flattery? It is unworthy of a philosopher.

ARISTES. You are severe indeed! I did not anticipate this reply.

THEODORE. Nor I yours. I thought you were following my argument. But your reply gives me ground for fearing that you have not spoken to me of your doubt to no purpose. Most men raise difficulties without reflection, and instead of attending seriously to the replies which are made to them, they are thinking of some repartee which should excite admiration for the subtlety of their imagination. So far from mutually instructing one another, they think only of flattering one another. They corrupt one another by the secret encouragement of the most criminal of passions; and, instead of suppressing all those feelings which the thirst for pride excites in them, instead of communicating to one another the true goods which reason imparts to them, they pay homage to one another which intoxicates and confuses them.

ARISTES. Ah, Theodore, how acutely I feel what you are saying! But can you read my heart?

THEODORE. No, Aristes. It is in my own heart that I read what I am saying. It is in my own heart that I find this mass of desires and vanity which makes me speak ill of the human race. I only know of what takes place in your heart by reference to what I feel in my own. I fear for you what I am apprehensive of for myself. But I am not sufficiently rash to judge of your actual dispositions. My manners surprise you. They are harsh and awkward and boorish, if you like. But what! Do you think that any sincere friendship based on reason will take refuge in evasion and pretence? You do not know the privileges of the "meditators." They have the right to point out to their friends, without any ceremony, what-

ever they find to be objectionable in their conduct. I should very much have liked, my dear Aristes, to have discerned in your reply a little more simplicity and much more attention; I should have wished that in you reason would always have had the upper hand, and that imagination would be suppressed. But if it is at present too tired of its silence, let us leave metaphysics. We can resume it another time. Do you know that the "meditator" of whom I have spoken to you a few days ago wishes to come here?

ARISTES. Who? Theotimus!

THEODORE. Quite so. Theotimus himself.

ARISTES. How good of him! What a joy! What an honour!

THEODORE. He has learnt, I do not know how, that I am here, and that we are philosophising together. For if Aristes is anywhere, the fact is soon known. That is so because everybody is desirous of having him. That is what comes from being a wit, and from having so many brilliant qualities. One is bound to be everywhere in order to disappoint no one. One no longer belongs to oneself.

ARISTES. What servitude!

THEODORE. Do you wish to free yourself from it? Become a thinker, and everyone will soon desert you. The great secret for freeing oneself from the importunity of many people is to talk rationally to them. This language which they do not understand gets rid of them for ever without their having cause for complaint.

ARISTES. That is true. But, with regard to Theotimus, when shall we have him here?

IX. THEODORE. Whenever you like.

ARISTES. Well, I want you kindly to remind him continually that we are expecting him, and above all to assure him that I am no longer what I used to be. But, pray, let him not interrupt the sequence of our discussion. I give up my doubt, Theodore. Yet I do not regret having submitted it to you. For by aid of the things you have told me I can see the solution of a number of apparent contradictions which I have been unable to harmonise with our notion of the Divine. When we are asleep God causes us to see a thousand objects which are not there. For He follows and is bound to

follow the general laws of the conjunction of body and soul. It is not because He wills to deceive us. If He acted upon us according to particular volitions we should not see all these phantoms in our sleep. I am no longer surprised at seeing monsters and all the irregularity of nature. I see the cause of these in the simplicity of the ways of God. To see innocence oppressed no longer surprises me; if the stronger win the day usually it is because God rules the world according to general laws and because He postpones to another time the punishment of crimes. He is just, notwithstanding the joyous success of infidels, notwithstanding the prosperity of the armies of the most unjust conquerors. He is wise, though the universe be full of productions wherein a thousand defects can be found. He is unchangeable, though He seems to contradict himself at every moment, though by means of hail He ravages the earth which He had covered with fruit by an abundance of rain. All these changes which contradict one another do not indicate any contradiction or change in the cause which produces them. On the contrary, God is steadily following the same laws, and His mode of operation has no relation to ours. If someone feels pain in an arm which he no longer has, it is not because God has planned to deceive him, it is solely because God does not change His designs but follows His own laws strictly. It is because He approves of them and will never condemn them; it is because nothing can break the uniformity of His ways, nothing can oblige Him to depart from what He has done. It seems to me, Theodore, I can discern that the principle of general laws has an infinite number of consequences of very great importance.

THEODORE. That is good, my dear Aristes; you rejoice my heart. I did not think you were sufficiently attentive to grasp the principles upon which the replies which I made to you depend. It is well. But it will be necessary to examine these principles thoroughly in order that you should realise more clearly their soundness and their wonderful fruitfulness. For do not imagine that it will be sufficient for you to get a glimpse of them, or even to have comprehended them, in order to be in the position to apply them to all the difficulties which depend upon them. It is necessary to master them by practice and to acquire the faculty of bringing them into relation with all matters upon which they can throw light. But

I propose to postpone the examination of these principles until the arrival of Theotimus. Meanwhile, try to discover by yourself what are the things with which we have some connection, what are the causes of these connections and what their effects. For it is well that your mind should be prepared for what is to be the subject of our discussion, in order that you should be able the more easily to reprove me if I go astray, or to follow me if I lead you straight to the goal to which all our energies ought to be directed.

SEVENTH DIALOGUE

The inefficacy of natural causes or the impotence of created things—We are united immediately and direct to God alone.

A PROFUSE exchange of compliments took place between Aristes and Theotimus, and the former, noticing that Theodore was getting rather tired of that sort of conversation, and wishing to let the newcomer have the honours of the battle of wits, said no more, and Theodore, opening the discussion, thought it his duty to say to Theotimus in favour of Aristes :—

THEODORE. In truth, Theotimus, I did not think you were such a gallant gentleman. You have obliged Aristes to yield, he who never yields to anyone. That is a victory which would be a great honour if you had gained it at Philander's. But in all probability it would have cost you dearer. For, make no mistake, you have won because at home Aristes wishes to do the honours. He yields here out of courtesy and out of a sort of duty.

THEOTIMUS. I have no doubt about it, Theodore. I see quite well that he wishes to spare me.

ARISTES. Press me no further, I entreat you; or at least, Theodore, leave me free to defend myself.

THEODORE. No, Aristes. All this is but idle talk. We shall say no more, either of us. Let us speak of something more important. Tell me, pray, anything that may have occurred to you on the subject which I suggested in our last discussion. What are the things with which we have some relation? What are the causes of these relations, and what their effects? For we prefer to hear you philosophise rather than to see ourselves overwhelmed with a profusion of kindness and courtesies.

ARISTES. Do you think, Theodore, that I have been awake all night in order to regale Theotimus with some studied speech?

THEODORE. Let us leave all that and speak naturally.

I. ARISTES. It seems to me, Theodore, that there is nothing to which I am more intimately united than my own body. For it cannot be touched without disturbing me. As soon as it is wounded I feel that I am injured, that I am hurt. There is nothing more insignificant than the proboscis of those importunate gnats that attack us on our evening walk ; and, nevertheless, however slightly they bury the imperceptible point of their venomous proboscis into my skin, my soul feels pain. The mere noise which they make in my ears alarms me—a sure indication that I am more closely united to my body than to anything else. Yes, Theodore, this is so true that it is really only through our body that we are united to the objects of our environment. If the sun did not disturb my eyes it would be invisible so far as I am concerned, and if, unfortunately for myself, I were to become deaf, I should no longer find so much delight in the intercourse I have with my friends. In fact, it is through my body that I hold to my religion. It is through my ears and my eyes that faith has entered into my mind and heart. Thus it is through my body that I have everything. I am therefore united to my body more intimately than to any other thing.

THEODORE. Have you meditated long, my dear Aristes, in order to make this great discovery ?

THEOTIMUS. All that may quite well be maintained, Theodore.

THEODORE. Yes, Theotimus, by people who consult only their senses. Whom are you taking Aristes for if you approve in his mouth that which any peasant might utter ? I do not recognise Aristes in this reply.

ARISTES. I see that I have made a very bad beginning.

THEODORE. Very bad indeed. I did not expect this sort of beginning. For I did not believe that you would forget to-day what you knew yesterday. But prejudices will always return to the attack and deprive us of our conquests, if we do not know how to maintain our position by our vigilance and good intrenchments. Oh well ! I submit to you that we are not united to our body at all, much less are we more intimately united to it than to anything else. I am using somewhat extreme expressions so that they shall leave a vivid impression and that you may not forget what I am saying. No, Aristes, to speak accurately and in all strictness, your mind is not and cannot be united to your body, for it can be united only to that

which can act upon it. How do you think that your body can act upon your mind? Do you think it is through your body that you are rational, happy or unhappy, and so on? Is it your body which unites you to God, to the Reason which enlightens you, or is it God who unites you to your body and through your body to everything in your environment?

ARISTES. Of course, Theodore, it is God who has joined my body to my mind. But can we not say . . .

THEODORE. What? That it is your mind which now acts upon your body and your body upon your mind? I understand you. God has instituted this union of mind and body. But as a result your body, and through it all objects, are capable of acting upon the mind. That union once established, your mind can act upon your body, and through it upon all things in your environment. Can we not put the matter thus?

ARISTES. There is something here that I do not quite understand. How is all this accomplished? I speak to you now as though I had forgotten the best part of what you have told me through neglecting to meditate upon it.

THEODORE. I have my doubts about that. You want me to prove to you more exactly and with greater detail the principles concerning which I have spoken hitherto. I must try to satisfy you. But I ask you to give me your attention, and you, Theotimus, to watch us both.

II. Do you think, Aristes, that matter, which, I take it, you do not believe to be capable of moving itself or of modifying itself, can ever modify a mind, make it happy or unhappy, represent ideas to it, or give to it various feelings? Think this over and answer me.

ARISTES. That does not seem to me possible.

THEODORE. Once again, think it over. Consult the idea of extension, and judge by means of the idea which represents all bodies or else nothing represents them whether they can have any other property but the passive faculty of receiving various figures and various movements. Is it not absolutely evident that the properties of extension can consist in nothing but relations of distance?

ARISTES. That is clear, and I have already granted you all that.

THEODORE. Hence it is not possible that bodies should act on minds.

ARISTES. Not in themselves or by means of their own force, one might reply. But why should they not be able to do so by means of a power which is the result of their union with minds?

THEODORE. Why do you say by means of a power which is the result of their union? These general terms convey nothing to my mind. Remember, Aristes, the principle of clear ideas. If you abandon it, you will at once be enveloped in obscurity. At the first step you will fall over the precipice. I can understand quite well that bodies, in consequence of certain natural laws, can act upon our mind in the sense that their modifications determine the activity of the divine volitions or of the general laws of the conjunction of body and soul, all of which I will explain to you soon. But that bodies should in themselves be capable of receiving a certain power by the efficacy of which they can act upon the mind I cannot understand. For what would this power be? Would it be a substance or a mode? If a substance, then the bodies do not act, but only this substance in bodies. If this power is a mode, then there is a mode in bodies which will be neither movement nor figure. Extension, therefore, will have modes other than relations of distance. But really, why should I dwell on this point? It is for you, Aristes, to give me some idea of the power which you conceive to be the effect of the conjunction of body and soul.

ARISTES. We do not know, one might reply, what this power is. But what can you infer from this confession of our ignorance?

THEODORE. That it is better to say nothing than not to know what one is saying.

ARISTES. Agreed. But one is saying only what one knows when one maintains that bodies act on minds, for nothing is more certain. Experience does not permit us to doubt that.

THEODORE. I doubt it very much, nevertheless, or rather I do not believe it at all. Experience teaches me that I feel pain, for example, when a pin pricks me. That is certain. But here let us stop, for experience does not teach us that a pin can act on our mind nor that it has any power. Let us believe none of this, I advise you.

III. ARISTES. I do not believe, Theodore, that a pin can act upon my mind. But it might be said perhaps that it can act upon my body and through my body upon my mind in consequence of their conjunction, for I admit that matter cannot act immediately on a mind. Note the word, *immediately*.

THEODORE. But your body, is it not matter?

ARISTES. Yes, certainly.

THEODORE. Your body, then, cannot act *immediately* upon your mind. Thus, if your finger be pricked by a pin, though your brain be disturbed by its action, neither the one nor the other can act upon your soul or cause it to feel pain; for neither the one nor the other can act immediately upon the mind, since your brain and your finger are nothing but matter.

ARISTES. Neither is it my soul which produces in itself this feeling of pain which afflicts it, for it suffers pain despite itself; I am obviously aware that the pain comes from some external cause. Thus your reasoning proves too much. I see quite well that you are going to say that it is God who causes my pain in me, and I agree; but He causes it only in consequence of the general laws of the conjunction of body and soul.

THEODORE. What do you mean, Aristes? All that is true. Explain your meaning more distinctly.

ARISTES. I believe, Theodore, that God has united my mind to my body so that in consequence of this union my mind and my body can act reciprocally upon one another, in virtue of the natural laws which God always follows very closely. That is all I have to say.

THEODORE. You do not explain yourself, Aristes. It is a sufficiently good indication that you do not understand. Union, general laws—what kind of reality do you understand by these terms?

THEOTIMUS. Apparently, Aristes believes that these terms are clear and without ambiguity because custom has made them very common, for when one often repeats an obscure or false thing without having even examined it one finds it difficult to believe that it is not true. This word "union" is one of the most ambiguous of words. But it is so common and convenient that it passes everywhere without hindrance on the part of anyone, without anyone examining whether it calls up within the mind any distinct idea; for nothing that is familiar

receives that attention without which it is impossible to understand; and all that affects the imagination pleasantly seems very clear to the mind which mistrusts nothing when it is paid in cash.

ARISTES. What, Theotimus, are you quite of the same opinion as Theodore? Can one be in doubt as to whether the soul and the body are united in the closest way conceivable? I would willingly believe that you have conspired to confuse my mind and to amuse yourself at my expense if I were not convinced that you are too good to have so uncharitable a design.

THEOTIMUS. You are a little too prejudiced, Aristes. Theodore maintains part of the truth, and if he exaggerates a little, it is in order to set us right. He sees that the weight of our prejudices drags us down, and his violence is meant only to hold us back. Let us listen to him, I beg of you.

IV. THEODORE. You maintain, Aristes, that your soul is joined to your body more closely than to any other thing. Well, for the moment I agree; but I do so on condition that you on your part will undertake for a day or two not to account for certain effects by means of principles which neither you nor I understand. Is not that quite reasonable?

ARISTES. Only too reasonable. But what do you mean?

THEODORE. This. There is the closest union in the world between your mind and your body. Eh! How can we doubt it? But you cannot say what precisely this union is. Let us not use it, therefore, as a principle for explaining the effects of the causes for which we are in search.

ARISTES. But what if these effects depend upon it necessarily?

THEODORE. If they depend upon it we shall be obliged to come back to it. But let us not assume this. If I asked you, Aristes, how it is that when I merely draw the arm of this chair all the remaining parts follow, would you believe that you had sufficiently explained the effect to me by replying that this is due to the union between the arm of this chair and the other parts which compose it? Assuredly, Theotimus would not be satisfied with such a reply. Children may be permitted to answer thus, but not philosophers, unless on occasions when they are not philosophising. In order to satisfy Theotimus on this question, it would be necessary to get back to the physical cause of that union of the parts which constitute hard bodies,

and to demonstrate to him that the hardness of bodies can come only from the compression of an invisible matter which surrounds them.[1] This word "union," then, explains nothing. It is itself in need of explanation. Thus, Aristes, you may like to take vague and general words for reasons. But do not think you can pay us in this coin, for though many people accept it and are satisfied with it, we are not so easily dealt with, owing to the fear which we have of being deceived.

ARISTES. What do you want me to do? I am paying you in a coin which I have accepted as good. I have no better. And since it has currency in the world, you might be satisfied with it. But let us just see in what way you yourself pay people. Prove to me by good arguments that bodies and minds mutually act on one another without having recourse to their union.

THEODORE. Let us not assume, Aristes, that they mutually act upon one another, but only that their modifications are reciprocal. Assume precisely nothing but what experience teaches you, and try to be attentive to what I am going to say. Do you think that one body can act upon another and set it in motion?

ARISTES. Who can deny it?

V. THEODORE. Theotimus and I, and soon perhaps Aristes, for there is a contradiction—a contradiction I say—in maintaining that bodies can act upon bodies. I will prove this paradox to you, which seems so contrary to experience, so opposed to philosophical tradition, so incredible to the learned and ignorant alike. Tell me: can a body move itself? Pray consult the idea which you have of bodies, for always remember that one must judge of things by the ideas which represent them, and not by the sensations which we have of them.[2]

ARISTES. No, I do not see that bodies can set themselves in motion by themselves. But neither do I see that they cannot do so. I am in doubt about it.

THEODORE. You do well to doubt and to stop short where you do not see clearly. But try to see clearly and to dispel your doubt. Courage! Let us advance.

ARISTES. I am afraid of taking a false step for lack of light. Enlighten me a little.

[1] *Recherche*, Bk. II, last chapter.
[2] Dialogues III, IV, V.

THEODORE. Consult clear ideas attentively, my dear Aristes. It is they that bring to attentive minds the light of which you are in need. Contemplate the archetype of bodies, intelligible extension. It is that which represents them, since it is in accordance with it that they have been formed. This idea is all-luminous. Consult it then. Do you not see clearly that bodies can be moved, but that they cannot move themselves? You hesitate. Well, let us suppose that this chair can of itself set itself in motion, in which direction will it go and with what degree of velocity when it is inclined to set itself in motion? Give it, then, some intelligence and a will capable of determining it. In a word, make a man of your chair. Otherwise this power of movement will be quite useless to it.

ARISTES. A man of my chair! What a strange thought!

THEOTIMUS. Only too common and true, as Theodore sees. For all those who judge of things by themselves or by the sensations which they have of them, and not by the ideas which represent them, make of all objects something that resembles themselves. They make God act like a man. They attribute to beasts what they feel in themselves. They give to fire and the other elements inclinations of which they have no other idea than the feeling which they have of them. Thus they humanise all things. But do not delay over this. Follow Theodore and answer him.

ARISTES. I quite believe that this chair cannot move itself. But how do I know that there is no other body to which God has given the power of moving itself? Remember, Theodore, that you have to prove it to be a contradiction that bodies can act upon one another.

VI. THEODORE. Well, Aristes, I shall prove it to you. It is a contradiction that a body should be neither at rest nor in movement; for God Himself, though all-powerful, cannot create a body which should be nowhere and which should not stand to any other body in some special relation. Every body is at rest when it preserves the same relation of distance to other bodies; it is in motion when this relation keeps on changing incessantly. Now, it is evident that every body either changes or does not change its relation of distance. There is no middle course between these alternatives, for these two propositions, it changes, it does not change, are contradictory. It is,

therefore, a contradiction that a body should be neither at rest nor in motion.

ARISTES. This was in need of no proof.

THEODORE. Now, it is the will of God which gives existence to bodies and to all created things, the existence of which, certainly, is not necessary. As this will which has created them abides for ever, they too abide, and should this will cease to be—I speak of God according to our way of conceiving—it follows necessarily that bodies would cease to be. It is, therefore, this very will which keeps bodies at rest or puts them in motion, since it is this will which gives them being, and since they could not exist if they were not either at rest or in motion. For, observe, God cannot accomplish the impossible or whatever involves a manifest contradiction; He cannot will that which cannot be conceived. He cannot will that this chair should be, without willing at the same time that it should be either here or there, and without His will putting it here or there, since you cannot conceive of the chair as existing unless it exists somewhere, here or elsewhere.

ARISTES. It seems to me, nevertheless, that I can think of a body without conceiving of it as either at rest or in motion.

THEODORE. That is not what I am saying. You can think of a body in general and make whatever abstractions you like, I agree. It is this which always misleads you. But, once more, I say that you cannot conceive of a body as existing unless you conceive of it as existing somewhere, and as changing or not changing the relation in which it stands to other bodies, and consequently as being either at rest or in motion. Hence there is a contradiction involved in saying that God makes a body without His making it either at rest or in motion.

ARISTES. Oh well, Theodore, I admit that. When God creates a body it follows at once that He makes it either at rest or in motion. But the moment of creation once passed, that is no longer so. Bodies then arrange themselves according to chance, or according to the law of the strongest.

VII. THEODORE. The moment of creation once passed! But if that moment never passes away, you are driven into a corner, you will have to yield. Observe then. God wills that a world shall come to be. His will being omnipotent, that world is at once an accomplished fact. Let God will no more that

there should be a world, and the world will be annihilated, for assuredly the world depends upon the will of the Creator. If, then, the world subsists, it is because God continues to will that there should be a world The conservation of created beings is, therefore, so far as God is concerned, their continuous creation. I say so far as God is concerned, for so far as the created beings are concerned there is a difference, since in and through the act of creation they pass from non-being to being, whereas through the act of conservation they continue to be. But in truth the act of creation never ceases, since in God conservation and creation are but one and the same volition, and in consequence are necessarily followed by the same effects.

ARISTES. I understand your reasons, Theodore, but I am not convinced, for the proposition, "let God will no more that there should be a world and it will be annihilated," seems to me false. It seems to me that it is not enough for the annihilation of the world that God should will no more that the world should be. It is necessary that He should will positively that it should be no more. For doing nothing, no volition is necessary. Thus, now that the world is an accomplished fact, let God but leave it there, it will remain for ever.

VIII. THEODORE. You are not thinking about the matter, Aristes. You are making created things independent. You judge of God and His works by the works of man, which presuppose nature and do not make it. Your house continues to exist, though its architect be dead. That is because its foundations are solid and because it has no connection with the life of him who built it. It does not depend upon the latter in any way. The ground of our being, on the other hand, depends essentially upon the Creator. And though the arrangement of some stones depends in some sense upon the will of men in consequence of the action of natural causes, the accomplished work is not thus dependent. The universe, on the other hand, having been created out of nothing, depends so much upon the universal Cause that it would relapse into non-being necessarily if God ceased to conserve it. For God does not will, and indeed cannot make, a created thing which is independent of His volitions.

ARISTES. I admit, Theodore, that there is an essential rela-

tion, connection, or dependence between created things and the Creator. But cannot one say that to retain for the created things their dependent nature it is enough that God should be able to annihilate them whenever He pleases?

THEODORE. No, emphatically no, my dear Aristes. What greater mark of independence is there than unaided self-subsistence? To speak accurately, your house does not depend upon you. Why? Because it subsists without you. You can put it to the flames whenever it pleases you, but you do not sustain it. That is why there is no essential relation of dependence between you and it. Thus, though God could destroy all created things whenever it pleased Him, so long as they could subsist without the continual influence of the Creator, they would not be essentially dependent upon Him. To become entirely convinced of the truth of what I am saying, suppose for a moment that God does not exist. The universe, according to your view, would not cease to exist, for a cause which has no influence is no more necessary for the production of an effect than a cause which does not exist. That is evident. Now, on this supposition you could not conceive the world as essentially dependent upon the Creator, since the Creator is now conceived as no longer existing. It is true that this supposition is impossible. But the mind can separate or join things as it pleases in order to ascertain the relation between them. Hence, if bodies are essentially dependent upon the Creator, they need, in order to exist, to be sustained by His continuous influence, by the efficacy of the same will which has created them. If God merely ceases to will their being, it follows necessarily and clearly from this alone that they would be no longer, for if they continued to be, though God continued no more to will that they should be, they would be independent, and indeed so independent that God could no longer destroy them. This I am going to prove to you.

IX. A God who is infinitely wise cannot will anything which is, so to speak, unworthy of being willed; He cannot love anything which is not lovable. Now, non-being has nothing which is lovable. Non-being cannot, therefore, be the object of the divine will Assuredly non-being has not enough reality, seeing that it has none at all, to stand in any relation with God's activity—an activity of infinite worth. It follows that God

cannot will in a positive manner the annihilation of the world. Created beings alone can, either through lack of power or through error, take non-being as the object of their volition. That is because a given object can hinder the fulfilment of their desire, or because they imagine it can do so. But if you think it over, you will see that nothing is more obvious than that a God who is infinitely wise and omnipotent cannot, without belying His own nature, display His own power in doing nothing, nay, in destroying His own work. It is impossible, I say, for God to exert His power not in remedying a disorder which He has not given rise to, but in annihilating the beings which He has made. Thus, Aristes, on the supposition that for the annihilation of the world it is not enough that God should cease to will its being, on the supposition that it is needful in addition that God should will positively that it should be no more, I maintain that the world is necessary and independent, since God could not destroy it without renouncing His own attributes, and since there is a contradiction in saying that He could renounce them.

Do not lessen, therefore, the dependent character of created things, lest you should incur the impiety of ruining it altogether. God can annihilate them whenever He pleases, as you say. Yet that is so because He can cease to will that which He has been free to will. As He is fully self-sufficient, He loves irresistibly His own substance alone The will to create the world, though eternal and immutable, just as all immanent operations are, involves nothing that is necessary. Since God was able to form the decree for the creation of the world, He is always able to cease to will that the world should be ; not because the act of His decree has the power to be or not to be, but because this immutable and eternal act is perfectly free, and because it involves the eternal duration of created beings only on the supposition that what God has willed from all eternity He will continue to will unto all eternity ; or, to speak more accurately, God wills without ceasing, but without variety, succession or necessity, all that He is about to give rise to in the course of time. The act of His eternal decree, though simple and immutable, is necessary only because He is. It is incapable of not being only because He is ; but it is, only because God wills its being. For just as a man, while he is moving his arm, is free not to move it, though on the supposition that it is being moved it is contradictory to say that it is not being moved, so, since God

wills always and without succession whatever He wills, His decrees, though immutable, do not on that account cease to be free, for they are necessary only by reason of the pre-supposition—only, that is to say, because God is immutable in His designs. But I am afraid I am digressing; let us return to our subject. Are you convinced now that created things are essentially dependent upon the Creator, so dependent that they cannot subsist without His influence, that they can continue to be only because He continues to will that they should be?

ARISTES. I have done all in my power to resist your arguments, but I yield. I have nothing to reply. The dependence of created things is quite different in character from what I thought.

X. THEODORE. Let us then resume what we have just been saying, and draw our conclusions from it. But take care that I do not draw any inferences which are not clearly involved in the principle.

The act of creation never ceases, the conservation of created things being on the part of God merely a continuous creation, merely an act of volition which persists and operates without ceasing. Now, God cannot conceive and hence cannot will that a body should be nowhere, or that it should stand to other bodies in no relation of distance. God cannot will that this chair should exist and by this act of will create and preserve it, unless He places it here or there or elsewhere. Hence, there is a contradiction in saying that one body can move another. I go further. There is a contradiction in saying that you can move your chair. Nay, more, there is a contradiction in maintaining that all the angels and demons together can move a bit of straw. The proof of this is clear. No power, however vast it may be imagined to be, can surpass or even equal the power of God. Now, there is a contradiction in saying that God could will that this chair should be, unless He at the same time wills that it should be somewhere and unless He places it there by the efficacy of His will, unless He keeps it there, creates it there. It follows that no power can transport it whither God does not transport it, nor fix or keep it where God does not fix or keep it, if it is God alone who adapts the efficacy of His actions to the ineffective actions of His creations. This it is necessary to explain to you in order to harmonise reason

with experience and in order to make you understand the greatest, most fruitful and necessary of all principles, namely, that God communicates His power to created beings only because He has made their modifications the occasional causes of the effects which He produces in Himself—occasional causes, I say, which determine the activity of His volitions in consequence of the general laws which He has prescribed to Himself, in order to make His mode of operation bear the character of His attributes and to display in His work that uniformity of action which is necessary in order to link together the parts which compose it and to save it from the irregularity and confusion of a kind of chaos wherein minds could never understand anything. I am saying this, my dear Aristes, in order to give you enthusiasm and to arouse your attention, for, as what I have said about the movement and rest of matter may seem to you of little importance, you might perhaps suppose that principles so insignificant and simple could never lead you to the great and important truths which you have already half seen, and upon which is based almost all that I have said hitherto.

ARISTES. Do not fear, Theodore, that I shall lose sight of you. I am following you, it seems to me, quite closely, and you delight me in such a way that I feel carried away. Courage, then! I shall know how to stop you if you pass too lightly over certain positions which are too difficult or too dangerous for me

XI. THEODORE. Let us suppose, then, Aristes, that God wills that there shall be a certain body upon this floor, say a ball; forthwith this is accomplished. Nothing is more movable than a sphere upon a plane, but all the powers imaginable could not disturb it so long as God does not intervene; for, once again, so long as God wills to create or keep this ball at the point A, or at any other point you please, and of necessity He must place it somewhere, no force could make it leave that point. Do not forget this; it is the basal principle.

ARISTES. I hold it in mind, this principle. The Creator alone can be the mover, only He who gives being to bodies can put them in the places which they occupy.

THEODORE. Very well. The moving force of a body is, therefore, nothing but the activity of God's will which conserves it successively in different places. This being granted, let us

suppose that this ball is set in motion, and that in the line of its motion it meets with another ball at rest. Experience teaches us that this other ball will move without fail, and according to a certain velocity always exactly observed. Now, it is not the first ball which sets the second in motion. This is clear from our principle, for a body cannot move another without communicating to it its moving force. But the moving force of a body in motion is nothing but the will of the Creator who keeps it successively in different places. It is not a quality which belongs to the body itself. Nothing belongs to it but its own modifications; and modifications are inseparable from substances. Hence bodies cannot move one another, and their encounter or shock is merely an occasional cause for the distribution of their movement. For being impenetrable, it is a kind of necessity that God, who I suppose acts always with the same efficacy or the same quantity of moving force, should, so to speak, distribute the force in proportion to the size of each of the bodies which come into contact, which at the moment of the shock may be looked upon as being no more than one, in order that they should move together toward the same spot, provided that their movements are not contrary and that they are in the same line; for, if they were directly contrary, it would be necessary to make a reciprocal permutation; and, if they were only partially contrary, the permutation would be in proportion Let not the rebounding of bodies and the increase of their motion—an effect known by experience—deceive you. All this is due to their elasticity, which depends upon so many causes that to deal with them here would be to abandon the road which we are to follow. God always moves or tends to move bodies in a straight line, because this line is the simplest and the shortest. When bodies meet, He changes the direction of their movement as little as possible, and I believe that He never changes the quantity of the moving force which animates matter. Upon these principles are founded the general laws of the communication of movements in accordance with which God acts incessantly. This is not the time to prove my contention, because it is sufficient for the present that you should know that bodies can neither set themselves in motion nor any bodies which they meet,—facts which our reasoning has just shown, and that there are certain laws in accordance with which God moves them unfailingly—a fact which experience teaches us.

ARISTES. This seems to me incontestable. But what do you think of this, Theotimus? You never contradict Theodore.

XII. THEOTIMUS. I have been convinced of these truths for a long time. But since you wish me to contest Theodore's opinion, I ask you to solve a little difficulty. Here it is. I quite understand that a body cannot of itself set itself in motion; but supposing it to be once moved, I maintain that it can set another body in motion, as a cause between which and its effect there is a necessary connection. For let us suppose that God had not yet established laws for the communication of motion, there would then in that case be no occasional causes. This being so, let the body A be set in motion, and in following the line of its motion let it slip on the body B, which I suppose to be concave and as the mould of the body A. What will happen? Decide.

ARISTES. What will happen? Nothing, for when there is no cause there can be no effect.

THEOTIMUS. What? Nothing? Something new must take place, for the body B will either be moved in consequence of the shock, or it will not be moved.

ARISTES. It will not be.

THEOTIMUS. So far, so good. But, Aristes, what becomes of the body A when it meets B? Either it will rebound or not. If it rebounds, we have a new effect of which B is the cause. If not, the matter is worse still, for we have then a force which is destroyed, or at least which does not act. The shock of bodies, then, is not an occasional cause, but a very real and veritable cause, since there is a necessary connection between the shock and such effect as you choose. Thus . . .

ARISTES. Wait a moment, Theotimus. What is it you are proving? That bodies being impenetrable, it follows necessarily that at the moment of the shock God determines to make a choice with regard to what you have just put before me. That is all. I am not alarmed. You do not prove at all that a body in motion can by virtue of something which belongs to it move whatever it encounters. If God had not as yet established the laws for the communication of motion, the nature of bodies, their impenetrability, would constrain Him to make such laws as He deemed fit, and He would determine Himself

in accordance with those laws which are the simplest, if these latter were sufficient for the execution of the works which He willed to form out of matter. But it is clear that impenetrability has no efficacy of its own, and that it can only give God, who deals with things in accordance with their nature, an occasion for varying or diversifying His activity without changing anything in His mode of operation.

Nevertheless, I am quite content to say that a body in motion is the true cause of the movement of those bodies which it encounters, for we must not quarrel about words. But what is a body in motion? It is a body transported by a divine act. The act which transports it can also transport that which it meets if it is directed upon it. Who calls this in question? Yet this act, this moving force, belongs in no way to bodies. It is the activity of the will of Him who creates them or conserves them successively in different places. Matter is essentially movable. It has, by its nature, a passive capacity for movement. But it has no active capacity; it is actually moved only by the continual action of the Creator. Thus, no body can disturb another body by any activity which belongs to its own nature. If bodies had in themselves the force to set themselves in motion, the strongest would subvert those which they encountered, as efficient causes; but being moved only by another force, their contact or encounter is only an occasional cause which, because of their impenetrability, constrains the mover or Creator to distribute His action. And because God is bound to act in a simple and uniform way, He had to make general laws and the simplest possible ones, in order that when a change is necessary He should change as little as is possible, and in order that by the same mode of operation He should produce an infinity of different effects. It is thus, Theotimus, that I understand these matters.

THEOTIMUS. You understand them very well.

XIII. THEODORE. Perfectly well. We are, accordingly, agreed upon the principle. Let us pursue it a little further. You cannot, then, Aristes, of yourself move your arm or alter your position, situation, posture, do to other men good or evil, or effect the least change in the world. You find yourself in the world, without any power, immovable as a rock, stupid, so to speak, as a log of wood. Let your soul be united to your body as

closely as you please, let there come about a union between it and all the bodies of your environment. What advantage would you derive from this imaginary union? What would you do in order merely to move the tip of your finger, or to utter even a monosyllable? Alas! unless God came to your aid, your efforts would be vain, the desires which you formed impotent; for just think, do you know what is necessary for the pronunciation of your best friend's name, or for bending or holding up that particular finger which you use most? But let us suppose that you know quite well what no one knows, about which even some scientists are not agreed, namely, that the arm can be moved only by means of the animal spirits, which flowing along the nerves to the muscles make them contract and draw towards themselves the bones to which they are attached. Let us suppose that you are acquainted with the anatomy and the action of your mechanism as well as a clockmaker is acquainted with his handiwork. But, at any rate, remember the principle that no one but the Creator of bodies can be their mover. This principle is sufficient to bind, indeed to annihilate, all your boasted faculties; for, after all, the animal spirits are bodies, however small they may be. They are, indeed, nothing but the subtlest parts of the blood and the humours. God alone, then, is able to move these small bodies. He alone knows how to make them flow from the brain along the nerves, from the nerves through the muscles, from one muscle to its antagonist—all of which is necessary for the movement of our limbs. It follows that, notwithstanding the conjuction of soul and body in whatever way it may please you to imagine it, you would be dead and inert if it were not for the fact that God wills to adapt his volitions to yours—His volitions, which are always effective, to your desires, which are always impotent. This then, my dear Aristes, is the solution of the mystery. All creatures are united to God alone in an immediate union. They depend essentially and directly upon Him. Being all alike equally impotent, they cannot be in reciprocal dependence upon one another. One may, indeed, say that they are united to one another and that they depend upon one another. I grant this, provided it is not understood in the ordinary and vulgar sense of the term, provided that one agrees that they are so only in consequence of the immutable and ever effective will of the Creator, only in consequence of the general laws which He has established, and by means of

which He regulates the ordinary course of His providence. God has willed that my arm shall be set in motion at the instant that I will it myself (given the necessary conditions). His will is efficacious, His will is immutable, it alone is the source of my power and faculties. He has willed that I should experience certain feelings, certain emotions, whenever there are present in my brain certain traces, or whenever a certain disturbance takes place therein. In a word, He has willed —He wills incessantly—that the modifications of the mind and those of the body shall be reciprocal. This is the conjunction and the natural dependence of the two parts of which we are constituted. It is but the mutual and reciprocal dependence of our modifications based on the unshakable foundation of the divine decrees—decrees which through their efficacy endow me with the power which I have over my body, and through it over certain other bodies—decrees which through their immutability unite me with my body, and through it to my friends, my possessions, my whole environment. I derive nothing whatever from my own nature, nothing from the nature imagined by the philosophers—all comes from God and His decrees. God has linked together all His works, though He has not on that account produced in them entities charged with the function of union. He has subordinated them to one another without endowing them with active qualities. The latter are but the vain pretensions of human pride, the chimerical productions of the philosophers' ignorance. Men's senses being affected by the presence of objects, their minds being moved by the inner feeling which they have of their own movements, they have not recognised the invisible operations of the Creator, the uniformity of His mode of action, the fruitfulness of His laws, the ever-present efficacy of His volitions, the infinite wisdom of His providence. Do not say any more, my dear Aristes, that your soul is united to your body more intimately than to anything else ; since its immediate union is with God alone, since the divine decrees are the indissoluble bonds of union between the various parts of the universe and of the marvellous network of all the subordinate causes.

XIV. ARISTES. Ah, Theodore, how clear, how sound and how Christian your principles are ! Moreover, how estimable and affecting ! I am deeply moved by them. What ! It is then God Himself

who is present in the midst of us, not as a mere spectator nor as an observer of our good and bad actions, but as the principle of our society, the bond of our friendship, the soul, so to speak, of the intercourse and communication which we have with one another. I can speak to you only through the efficacy of His powers, touch you or disturb you only by means of the movement which He communicates to me. I do not even know what arrangement of organs is necessary in order to make my voice utter what I am saying to you without any hesitation. The play of these organs is beyond me. The variety of words, tones, modulations, is almost infinite in detail. God knows this detail, He alone regulates the movement at the very instant of my desire Yes, He alone drives back the air which He has Himself made me breathe. He alone produces by means of my organs the vibrations and disturbances which are necessary. He alone diffuses them and makes out of them the words by the aid of which I can reach your mind and pour into your heart what mine can no longer keep within itself. In truth, it is not I who breathe; I breathe despite myself. It is not I who speak to you; I merely wish to speak to you. But suppose my breath did depend upon myself, suppose I knew exactly what to do in order to explain myself, suppose I could form words and give them utterance, how would they reach you, how strike your ears, how disturb your brain or affect your heart, were it not for the efficacy of the divine power which links together all the parts of the universe? Yes, Theodore, all this is a necessary consequence of the laws of the conjunction of soul and body and of the communication of motion. All this depends upon these two principles, of which I am convinced, that none but the Creator of bodies can be their mover, and that God communicates His power to us only through the establishment of certain general laws, the realisation of which we determine through our various modifications. Ah, Theodore and Theotimus, God alone is the bond of our society. May He be its *end*, since He is its originating cause! Let us not abuse His power. Unhappy they who make use of it for their criminal passions! Nothing is more sacred than power, nothing more divine. It is a kind of sacrilege to make a profane use of it; now I see that to do this would mean to make the just avenger of crimes assist in iniquity. Of ourselves we can do nothing, hence of ourselves we ought to will nothing. We can act only

through the efficacy of the divine power, hence we ought to will nothing except in accordance with the divine law. Nothing is more evident than these truths.

THEODORE. These are excellent conclusions.

XV. THEOTIMUS. They are wonderful principles for ethics. But let us return to metaphysics. Our soul is not united to our body in the ordinary sense of these terms. It is immediately and directly united to God alone. It is through the efficacy of His action alone that the three of us are here together; nay, more, that we all share the same opinion, are penetrated by the same truth, animated, it seems to me, by the same spirit, kindled with the same enthusiasm. God joins us together by means of the body, in consequence of the laws of the communication of movements. He affects us with the same feelings in consequence of the laws of the conjunction of body and soul. But, Aristes, how comes it about that we are so strongly united in mind? Theodore utters some words unto your ears. These are but the air struck by the organs of the voice. God transforms, so to speak, this air into words, into various sounds. He makes you understand these various sounds through the modifications by which you are affected. But where do you get the sense of the words from? Who is it that discloses to you and to myself the same truth as Theodore is contemplating? If the air which He forces back when speaking does not contain the sounds you hear, assuredly it will not contain the truths which you understand.

ARISTES. I follow you, Theotimus. We are united in mind because all of us are united to the universal Reason which illumines all intelligences. I am wiser than you think. Theodore has already led me to the point to which you wish to conduct me. He has convinced me that there is nothing visible, nothing which can act upon the mind and reveal itself thereto, but the substance of Reason, which is not only efficacious but also intelligent. Yes, nothing that is created can be the immediate object of our knowledge. We see things in this material world, wherein our bodies dwell, only because our mind through its attention lives in another world, only because it contemplates the beauties of the archetypal and intelligible world which Reason contains. As our bodies live upon the earth and find sustenance in the fruits which it produces, so our minds feed on

the same truths as the intelligible and immutable substance of the divine Word contains. The words which Theodore utters into my ears urge me, in consequence of the law of the conjunction of soul and body, to be attentive to the truths which he is discovering in the supreme Reason. This turns my mind in the same direction as his. I see what he sees because I look where he looks, and by means of the words whereby I reply to his words, though both alike are, in themselves, devoid of sense, I discuss with him and enjoy with him a good which is common to all, for we are all essentially united to Reason, so united that without it we could enter into no social bond with anyone.

THEOTIMUS. Your reply, Aristes, surprises me extremely. How, knowing all that you are now telling me, could you reply to Theodore that we are united to our body more intimately than to anything else ?

ARISTES. I did so because one is inclined to say only what is present to the memory, and because abstract truths do not present themselves to the mind so naturally as those that one has heard all one's life. When I have meditated as much as Theotimus I shall speak no more in mechanical fashion, but regulate my words in accordance with the deliverances of inner truth. I understand then now, and I shall not forget it all my life, that we are united immediately and directly to God. It is in the light of His wisdom that He makes us see the magnificence of His works, the model upon which He forms them, the immutable art which regulates their mechanism and movements, and it is through the efficacy of His will that He unites us to our body, and through our body to all those in our environment.

XVI. THEODORE. You might add that it is through the love which He bears to Himself that He communicates to us that invincible enthusiasm which we have for the Good. But of this we shall speak on another occasion. It is sufficient for the present that you are quite convinced that the mind can be united immediately and directly to God alone, that we can have no intercourse with created beings except by the power of the Creator, which is communicated to us only in consequence of His laws, and that we can enter into no social union amongst ourselves and with Him except through the Reason with which He is consubstantial. This once granted, you will see that

it is of the highest importance for us to try to acquire some knowledge of the attributes of this supreme Being, since we are so much dependent upon Him; for, after all, He acts upon us necessarily according to His nature. His mode of activity must bear the character of His attributes. Not only must our duties tend towards His perfections, but our whole course of action ought to be so regulated in accordance with His that we may take the proper measures for the realisation of our purposes, and that we may find a combination of causes which is favourable to these designs. In this connection, faith and experience teach us many truths by means of the short-cut of authority and by the proofs of very pleasant and agreeable feelings. But all this intelligence does not give us forthwith; it ought to be the fruit and the recompense of our work and application. For the rest, being made to know and love God, it is clear that there is no occupation which is preferable to the meditation upon the divine perfections which should animate us with charity and regulate all the duties of a rational creature.

ARISTES. I understand quite well, Theodore, that the worship which God demands from minds is a spiritual worship. It consists in being full of the knowledge of Him, full of love of Him, in forming judgments of Him which are worthy of His attributes, and in regulating in accordance with His will all the movements of our heart. For God is spirit, and He wishes to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. But I must confess that I am extremely afraid lest I should form judgments on the divine perfections which would dishonour them. Is it not better to honour them by silence and admiration, and to devote ourselves solely to investigation of the less sublime truths and those which are more in proportion to the capacity of our minds?

THEODORE. How do you mean, Aristes? You are not thinking of what you are saying. We are made to know and love God. Do you mean, then, to say that you do not want us to think of Him, speak of Him, I might even add worship Him? We ought, you say, to worship Him by silence and admiration. Yes, by a respectful silence which the contemplation of His greatness imposes upon us, by a religious silence to which the glory of His majesty reduces us, by a silence forced upon us, so to speak, due to our impotence, and not having as its source a criminal negligence or a misguided curiosity to know, instead of Him, objects less worthy of our application. What do you

admire in the Divine if you know nothing of Him? How could you love Him if you did not contemplate Him? How can we instruct one another in charity if we banish from our discussion Him whom you have just recognised as the soul of all the intercourse which we have with one another, as the bond of our little society? Assuredly, Aristes, the more you know the supreme Being, the more you will admire His infinite perfections. Do not fear lest you should meditate too much upon Him and speak of Him in an unworthy way, providing you are led by faith. Do not fear lest you should entertain false opinions of Him so long as they are in conformity with the notion of the infinitely perfect Being. You will not dishonour the divine perfections by judgments unworthy of them, provided you never judge of Him by yourself, provided you do not ascribe to the Creator the imperfections and limitations of created beings. Think of this, therefore. I, too, shall think of it, and I hope Theotimus will do so likewise. That is necessary for the development of the principle which I think I ought to put before you. We shall meet to-morrow, then, at the usual hour, for it is time for me to leave.

ARISTES. Adieu, Theodore. I beg of you, Theotimus, that the three of us should meet at the hour arranged.

THEOTIMUS. I am going with Theodore, but I shall come back with him, as you desire it. Ah, Theodore, how changed Aristes is! He is attentive, he scoffs no more, he is no longer a stickler for forms—in a word, he listens to reason and submits to it in good faith.

THEODORE. That is true, but his prejudices still come in the way and somewhat confuse his ideas. Reason and prejudice both have their turn in what he says. Now truth makes him speak, now memory plays tricks upon him. But his imagination dares no longer to revolt. This indicates that he is sound at heart and encourages me a good deal.

THEOTIMUS. What do you expect, Theodore? Prejudices are not so easily got rid of as an old coat which is no longer thought of. It seems to me that we have been like Aristes, for we were not born but became philosophers. It will be necessary to repeat to him the great principles ceaselessly, in order that he should think of them so often that his mind will obtain mastery over them, and that in the moment of need they may occur to him quite naturally.

THEODORE. That is what I have been trying to do hitherto. But this makes it difficult for him, for he loves detail and variety of thoughts. I beg of you always to dwell upon the necessity of a thorough understanding of principles, in order to stop the vivacity of his mind, and please do not forget to meditate upon the subject of our discussion.

EIGHTH DIALOGUE

God and His attributes.

THEODORE. Well, Aristes, what would you like to do? We must know what mood you are in, so that we can adapt what we have to say to it.

ARISTES. I have thought over in my mind all that you have told me up till now, and I confess I could not resist the strength of the proofs upon which your principles are based. But on reflecting upon the subject of the divine Attributes which you have enumerated for us, I found so many difficulties that I was disheartened. This matter was too sublime, or too abstract for me. I could not reach it, and I find no point which would give me any hold upon it.

THEODORE. What, you are not going to tell us anything?

ARISTES. No, because I have nothing worth saying, nothing that satisfies me. I shall listen to you two, if you do not mind.

THEODORE. But we do. However, since you do not wish to give us the result of your meditation, allow me to put some questions to you in order to ascertain what you feel in regard to what has occurred to me.

ARISTES. Willingly. But, Theotimus?

THEODORE. Theotimus shall be the judge in reference to any small differences that may arise out of the divergence of our views.

THEOTIMUS. The judge! How do you mean? It is Reason that must preside over us and decide authoritatively.

THEODORE. I mean, Theotimus, that you shall be a subordinate judge, and under the authority of Reason, and that you shall pronounce judgment only according to the laws which it prescribes to us as well as to you. Let us lose no time, please. Only do you confront what we say to each other with the deliverances of inner truth in order to warn and

correct him who may go astray. Come, Aristes, follow me, and only stop me when I pass by difficult points too lightly.

I. By the Divine we understand the Infinite, the Being without restriction, Being infinitely perfect. But nothing finite can represent the Infinite. Hence it is enough to think of God to know that He exists. Do not be surprised, Theotimus, if Aristes lets this pass, for he had already agreed to this before you were here.[1]

ARISTES. Yes, Theotimus, I am convinced that nothing finite can have enough reality to represent the Infinite. But I am certain that I see the Infinite. Hence the Infinite exists, since I see it, and I could not see it except in itself. As my mind is finite, the knowledge which I have of the Infinite is finite. I do not understand it. I do not fathom it. I am never quite certain that I shall ever be able to fathom it. Not only can I find no end therein, but I see that there is none. In a word, the perception which I have of the Infinite is limited. Yet the objective reality in which my mind, so to speak, loses itself has no limits. Of all this I cannot now have any doubts.

THEOTIMUS. Nor I either.

THEODORE. This being granted, it is clear that the word "God" being only an abbreviated expression for Being infinitely perfect, it is a contradiction to suppose that we can be mistaken when we attribute to God nothing but what we see is fitting to belong to the infinitely perfect Being. For, if we are never mistaken when we predicate of the works of God, nothing but what we see clearly and distinctly belongs to the infinitely perfect Being, nothing but what we discover not in an idea distinct from God, but in His own substance, we may attribute to God, or to the infinitely perfect Being, all the perfections, however incomprehensible they may appear to us, provided we are certain that they are realities or veritable perfections,—realities and perfections, I say, which contain nothing of non-being, which are not limited by imperfections and limitations similar to those of created things. Observe now.

II. God is the infinitely perfect Being. Hence God is independent. Think of this, Aristes, and stop me only when I speak of anything which you do not see clearly to be a perfection,

[1] Dialogue II.

or to belong to the infinitely perfect Being. God is independent. Hence He is unchangeable.

ARISTES. God is independent, hence He is unchangeable! Why unchangeable?

THEODORE. Because there can be no effect or change without a cause. But God is independent of the activity of causes. Hence, if any change took place in God, He Himself would be the cause of it. But, although God is the cause and the principle of His volitions and decrees, He has never produced any change within Himself; for His decrees, though perfectly free, are themselves eternal and immutable, as I have already pointed out to you.[1] God has made these decrees, or rather He forms them without ceasing in His eternal wisdom, which is the inviolable law of His will. And, though the effects of these decrees are infinite and produce thousands upon thousands of changes in the universe, the decrees are always the same. That is so because the efficacy of these decrees is determined to action only by the circumstances of those causes which are called "natural," and which I think should be called "occasional," for fear of countenancing the dangerous prejudice of a nature and an efficacy distinguished from the will of God and from His omnipotence.

ARISTES. I do not quite understand all this. God is free and indifferent, for example, to the movement of any body or to any other effect you please. If He is thus indifferent, He can produce this effect or not produce it. This effect is a result of His decrees, I grant. But it is certain that God is able *not* to produce it. Hence, He is able not to will to produce it. God, therefore, is not immutable, since He can change His will, and not will to-morrow what He wills to-day.

THEODORE. You do not remember, Aristes, what I told you in our last discussion.[2] God is free, and even indifferent to thousands of effects. He can change His will in the sense that He is indifferent whether to will or not to will a certain effect. But observe. At this moment when you are seated, can you be standing up? You can, of course, do so absolutely; but, on the supposition from which we start, you cannot. For you cannot be standing up and seated at the same time. Understand, then, that in God there is no succession of thoughts and volitions, that it is by an eternal and immutable act that He knows all, and that He wills all that He wills. God wills

[1] Dialogue VII. [2] Dialogue IX.

with perfect liberty and entire indifference to create the world. He wills to make certain decrees and to establish simple and general laws in order to govern the world in a manner which shall bear the character of His attributes. But these decrees, being laid down, cannot be changed, not because they are absolutely necessary, but by the force of the pre-supposition. Observe this well, that they are laid down once for all, and God, in forming them, knew so well what He was doing that they cannot be cancelled. For, although He has made some of them for a certain time, that is not because He changes His mind when this time arrives, but because one and the same act of His will has reference to the different times which are contained in His eternity. God, then, does not change, and cannot change, His designs, His thoughts, His volitions. He is immutable, and this is one of the perfections of His nature; nevertheless, He is perfectly free in all that He does outwardly. He cannot change because what He wills He wills without succession by a simple and invariable act; but He is able not to will it, because He wills freely what He wills actually.

ARISTES. I shall think over what you are telling me, Theodore. Let us pass on to a further point. I believe that God is immutable. It seems to me evident that it is a perfection not to be subject to change. That is sufficient for me. Even though I cannot reconcile the immutability of God with His liberty, I believe that He possesses both these attributes, since He is infinitely perfect.

III. THEOTIMUS. Allow me, Theodore, to put a small difficulty before you. You said just now that the immutable decrees of God are determined to action only by the circumstances of the causes which are called "natural," and which we call "occasional." These are your terms. But I ask you what becomes of miracles? The impact of bodies, for example, is the occasional cause of the communication of movement from one body to another. Cannot God, then, suspend in a certain case the effect of the general law of the communication of movements, and has He not often suspended it?

THEODORE. Once for all, Theotimus, and you too, Aristes—for I see that it is because of you that Theotimus wishes me to explain myself further; he sees that you do not quite grasp my meaning—once for all, Aristes, when I say that God always

follows the general laws which He has prescribed for Himself, I refer only to His general and ordinary Providence. I do not debar miracles or effects which do not follow from His general laws. Moreover, Theotimus, and it is to you that I am speaking now, when God performs a miracle and when He does not act in accordance with the general laws which are known to us, I maintain either that God is then acting in accordance with other general laws which are unknown to us, or that what He does then is determined by certain circumstances which He has had in view from all eternity when He produced the simple, eternal and invariable act, which includes both the general laws of His ordinary providence and the exceptions to these laws. But these circumstances should not be called occasional causes in the same sense in which the impact of bodies, for example, is the occasional cause of the communication of movements, because God has made no general laws for regulating the activity of His volitions in a uniform way on the occasion of these circumstances. For in the case of exceptions to general laws God acts now in one way, now in another, though always in accordance with the dictates of that one of His attributes which is, so to speak, the most precious to Him at the moment. I mean that if what He then owes to justice is of greater importance than what He owes to His wisdom, or to all the other attributes, He will follow in this exception the dictates of His justice. For God always acts only in accordance with what He is, only in order to do honour to His divine attributes, only in order to satisfy what He owes to Himself, for He is His own principle and the end of all His own volitions, whether He is punishing us, showing us pity, or rewarding us for His own gifts, for the merits which we have won by His grace. But I am afraid, Theotimus, that Aristes will not be pleased with our digression. Let us come back to our point. We shall, moreover, be obliged in the discussions that follow to give an account of the principles upon which the explanation of the difficulties which you would raise depends.

God, or the infinitely perfect Being, is, then, independent and immutable. He is also omnipotent, eternal, necessary, immense . . .

ARISTES. Gently. He is omnipotent, eternal, necessary, yes, these attributes befit a Being infinitely perfect. But why immense? What do you mean?

IV. THEODORE. I mean that the divine substance is everywhere, not only in the universe, but infinitely beyond. For God is not contained in His work—rather is His work in Him and subsists in His substance, which conserves it by its omnipotent power. It is in Him that we have being. It is in Him that we have movement and life, as the Apostle says, *in ipso enim vivimus, movemur et sumus.*[1]

ARISTES. But God is not corporeal. Hence, He cannot be extended everywhere.

THEODORE. It is because He is not corporeal that He can be everywhere. If He were corporeal, He could not penetrate bodies in the way in which He does penetrate them. For there is a contradiction in saying that two feet of extension are only one. As His divine substance is not corporeal, it is not locally extended as bodies are, big in an elephant, small in a gnat. It is *all* that it is, so to speak, wherever it is, and it is everywhere, or rather everything is in it; because the substance of the Creator is the intimate bond of union of all created things. Created extension is to the divine immensity as time is to eternity. All bodies are extended in the immensity of God, just as all times succeed one another in His eternity. God is always all that He is without any temporal succession. He fills all His substance without being locally extended. There is in His existence no past nor future; all is present, immutable, eternal. There is in His substance neither great nor small, all is simple, equal, infinite. God has created the world, but the will to create it has not passed away. God will change it, but the will to change it is not future. The will of God, what He has done and what He will do, is an eternal and immutable act, the effects of which change without there being any change in God. In a word, God has not been, will not be, but He *is*. One can say that God was in the time that is past, but He was then all that He will be in the future time. His duration, if one may use this term, is, as His existence, in its entirety eternal, and in its entirety in all the moments which succeed one another in His eternity. In like manner God is not partly in heaven, partly on earth, He is all that He is in His immensity, and all that He is in the bodies which are locally extended in His immensity, all that He is in all the parts of matter, though these are divisible *ad infinitum*; or, to speak more accurately, God is not so much in

[1] Acts xvii. 20.

the world as the world is in Him, or in His immensity, just as eternity is not so much in time as time is in eternity.

ARISTES. It seems to me, Theodore, that you are explaining one obscure thing by another which is not too clear. I do not feel so convinced as during the last few days.

V. THEODORE. I do not undertake, Aristes, to make you understand clearly the immensity of God and the way in which He is everywhere. This seems to me incomprehensible, just as it does to you. But I want to give you some idea of the immensity of God by comparing it with His eternity. As you have granted that God is eternal, I thought I might be able to convince you that He is immense, by comparing the eternity which you accept with the immensity which you refuse to recognise.

THEOTIMUS. What do you want Theodore to do? He is comparing divine things with divine things, that is the way to explain them, so far as explanation is possible at all. But you are comparing them with finite things. That is precisely the way to deceive yourself. The human mind does not fill any space; therefore, the divine substance is not immense. This is a false conclusion. Created extension is larger in a big space than in a small one. Hence, if God were everywhere, He would be larger in a giant than in a pygmy. This is another conclusion derived from a comparison of the infinite with the finite. If you wish to form any judgments with regard to the divine attributes, consult the infinite, the notion of the infinitely perfect Being, and do not stop at ideas of particular and finite beings. This is how Theodore is handling the subject. He does not judge of the divine immensity on the basis of ideas of created things, either corporeal or spiritual. He knows well that the divine substance is not subject to the imperfections and limitations inseparable from created beings. That is why he concludes that God is everywhere, and that He has nowhere the mode of being that belongs to bodies.

ARISTES. What! God is here entirely so to speak, and also here and there and everywhere else, and in all the spaces which can be conceived beyond the world! That is unintelligible.

THEODORE. Yes, God is in everything, or rather everything is in God, and the world, however large you imagine it to be, can

neither equal nor be compared to Him. We cannot understand how this can be, I agree, but that is because the infinite is beyond us. Do you mean, then, to assert, Aristes, that God is not in your garden, in the sky, and wholly or entirely wherever He is? Do you dare to deny that God is everywhere?

ARISTES. He is present through His operation. But . . .

THEODORE. How through His operation? What sort of reality can attach to the operation of God if it be distinguished and separated from His substance? By the operation of God you do not mean the effect which He produces; for the effect is not the action but the termination of the action. By the operation of God you mean apparently the act whereby He operates. But if the act whereby God produces or conserves this chair is here, assuredly God Himself is here; and if He is here, He must be here wholly and entirely, and similarly in all other places where He operates.

ARISTES. I believe, Theodore, that God is present in the world in the way in which you believe your soul is present in your body. For I know well that you do not think that the soul is diffused through all the parts of the body. It is in the head, because there it reasons. It is also in our arms and feet, because it sets them in motion. In the same way, God is in the world, because He conserves and governs it.

VI. THEODORE. What a mass of prejudices and obscurities there is in your comparison! The soul is not in the body, nor is the body in the soul, though their modifications are reciprocal in consequence of the general laws of their union. But both are in God, who is the true cause of the mutual adaptation of their modifications. Minds are in the divine Reason and bodies in His immensity, but neither can be in the other, for mind and body have no essential relation to one another. It is with God alone that they have necessary relation. The mind can think without the body, but it can know nothing save in the divine Reason. Body can be extended without mind, but it cannot exist except in the immensity of God. The qualities of body have nothing in common with those of mind, for body cannot think, nor mind be extended. But the one, no less than the other, participates in the divine Being. God, who gives them their reality, possesses that reality, for He possesses all the perfections of all created

things without their limitations. He knows, as minds do. He is extended, as bodies are, but all this in a way entirely different from theirs. Thus God is everywhere in the world and beyond. But the soul is not present anywhere in bodies. It does not know in the brain as you imagine. It knows only in the intelligible substance of the divine Word, though it knows in God only in virtue of what takes place in a certain portion of matter called the brain. Neither does it set the limbs of the body in motion by the application of a force which belongs to its nature. It moves them only because He who is everywhere in His immensity executes by His power the impotent desires of His creatures. Do not say then, Aristes, that God is in the world which He produces as the soul is in the body which it animates, for there is no truth in your comparison; not only because the soul cannot be in the body, nor the body in the soul, but still more because as minds cannot operate in the bodies which they animate, they cannot be diffused in them through their operation in the way in which you maintain the divine operation is present in the world, through which operation alone, according to you, God is present everywhere.

ARISTES. What you are saying now seems to me very difficult. I shall think about it, but meanwhile please tell me: before the world existed and God operated therein, where was He?

VII. THEODORE. I put the question to you, Aristes, who maintain that God is present in the world only by His operation. You do not answer! Well, I say that before the creation of the world God was where He is now, and where He will be were the world to return to naught. He was in Himself. When I tell you that God is in the world and infinitely beyond it, you do not grasp my meaning if you believe that the world and the imaginary space beyond are, so to speak, the space which the infinite substance of the Divinity occupies. God is in the world only because the world is in God, for God is only in Himself, only in His immensity. If He created new spaces, He would not thereby gain a new presence in consequence of these spaces. He would not increase His immensity. He would not make a new place for Himself. He is eternally and necessarily where these spaces are created; but He is not there locally as the spaces are. Extension, Aristes, is a reality, and in the Infinite

all realities are present. God, then, is extended, no less than bodies are; since God possesses all absolute realities or all perfections. But God is not extended in the way in which bodies are; for, as I have just told you, He has not the limitations and imperfections of created things. God knows, as created minds do, but He does not think in the manner in which they do. He is Himself the immediate object of His knowledge. There is in Him no succession or variety of thoughts. One of His thoughts does not exclude, as in our case, the being of others. They are not mutually exclusive. In like manner God is extended, no less than bodies, but there are no parts in His substance. One part does not imply, as in the case of bodies, the non-being of another part, and the place of His substance is but His substance itself. He is always one and always infinite, perfectly simple and composed, so to speak, of all realities and of all perfections. The true God is Being, and not a particular being, as He Himself said to Moses, His servant, through the mouth of the commissioned angel. He is being without restriction, and not a finite being, or a being made up, so to speak, of being and non-being. Do not, then, attribute to God whom we worship anything but what you conceive in the infinitely perfect Being. Do not take away from Him anything but what is finite, or what partakes of non-being. And, though you do not understand clearly all that I am telling you, even as I do not understand it myself, you will understand at least that God is such as I am representing Him to be; for you ought to know that in order to judge worthily of God we must attribute to Him only attributes which are incomprehensible. This is evident, since God is infinite in every sense, since nothing finite is fitting for Him, and since all that is infinite in every sense is in every way incomprehensible to the human mind.

ARISTES. Ah! Theodore, I am beginning to realise that I was entertaining quite unworthy views of God, because I judged of Him confusedly by the standard of myself, or by ideas which can only represent finite things. It seems to me evident that any judgment which is not based on the notion of the infinitely perfect Being, of the incomprehensible Being, is not worthy of the Divine. Assuredly, if the Pagans had not abandoned that notion, they would not have made false gods of their chimeras; and if Christians always followed this notion of Being, or of the

Infinite, which is naturally engraved upon our mind, they would not speak of God in the way some of them do.

VIII. THEOTIMUS. You seem to be quite content, Aristes, with what Theodore has just told you, namely, that the attributes of God are incomprehensible in every way. Still, I am afraid there is some ambiguity in this. For it seems to me that we can form a clear conception of an immense extension, and one which has no limits. The mind does not understand or measure this extension: I agree. Yet it knows clearly its nature and its properties. But now, what is the immensity of God if not an infinite intelligible extension, through which not only is God present everywhere, but in which we see spaces which have no limits? It is, then, not true that the immensity of God is in every sense incomprehensible by the human mind, since we know intelligible extension quite clearly, so clearly that it is in it and through it that geometricians discover all their demonstrations.

ARISTES. It seems to me, Theotimus, that you do not quite grasp Theodore's meaning. But I have not meditated sufficiently upon the matter. I cannot explain to you very well what I only half see myself. I will ask you, Theodore, to answer for me.

THEODORE. What! Theotimus, are you confusing the divine immensity with intelligible extension? Do you not see that there is an infinite difference between these two things? The immensity of God is His substance itself spread out everywhere, and all of it is present everywhere, filling all places without local extension, and this I submit is quite incomprehensible. Intelligible extension, on the other hand, is only the substance of God in so far as it is representative of bodies, in so far as it is capable of being participated in by them, with the limitations and imperfections which are proper to them, and which this intelligible extension represents, being their idea or archetype. No finite mind can understand the immensity of God, or any of the other attributes or ways of being of the divine, if I may express myself so. These ways of being are always infinite, always divine, and always, therefore, incomprehensible. Nothing, on the other hand, is clearer than intelligible extension. Nothing is more intelligible than the ideas of bodies, since it is through them that we know quite distinctly not the nature of God, but the nature of matter. Assuredly, Theotimus, if you judge of the immensity of God

by means of the idea of extension, you are giving God a corporeal extension. You can make this extension as infinite, as immense as you please, but you will not remove from it the imperfections which this idea represents. The substance of God will no longer be all of it wherever it is. In judging of God by means of the idea of created things, you will be corrupting the notion of the infinitely perfect Being, of the Being who is incomprehensible in every way. Therefore, be very careful, both of you, about the judgments which you form with regard to what I am telling you of the Divinity; for I warn you once for all that when I speak of God and His attributes, if you understand what I am saying, and if you have an idea of it which is clear and in proportion to the finite capacity of your mind, then either I am mistaken, or you do not grasp what I mean. For all the absolute attributes of the Divine are incomprehensible to the human mind, though it can understand clearly whatever there is in God which is related to created things, I mean the intelligible ideas of all possible productions.

THEOTIMUS. I see quite well, Theodore, that I was mistaken in confusing the infinite intelligible extension with the immensity of God. This extension is not the divine substance spread out everywhere, but is this substance, in so far as it is representative of bodies and capable of being participated in by them, in the way in which a corporeal thing can participate imperfectly in Being. I know quite well, nevertheless, that an infinite corporeal extension, such as some conceive the universe to be, which according to them is made up of an infinite number of vortices, would still have nothing divine in it. For God is not the Infinite in extension, but *the* Infinite simply. He is Being without restriction. But it is a property of the Infinite, which is incomprehensible by the human mind, as I have heard you say often, to be at the same time one and all things, compounded, so to speak, of an infinity of perfections, and so simple that each perfection which He possesses includes within itself all the others without any real distinction. This property certainly is less suited for a material universe and for the parts of which it is composed than for the substance of the soul, which, without any separation of parts, can receive at the same time modifications which are different; a slight indication, nevertheless, of the divine simplicity and universality.

THEODORE. You are right, Theotimus. There is no substance more imperfect, more distant from the Divine than matter, be it even infinite. It corresponds perfectly to intelligible extension, which is its archetype, but it does not correspond to the divine immensity except in a very imperfect way; and it does not correspond at all to the other attributes of the infinitely perfect Being.

IX. ARISTES. What you are saying now makes me understand what the unbeliever of these days, who makes his God out of the universe, has not grasped. He was a veritable atheist. But I cannot help thinking of a number of good people who, for lack of a little philosophy, entertain unworthy opinions of the Divinity. Their God is not the universe, he is the creator of the universe. This is about all they know of him. It would be a great deal, if they adhered to that without corrupting the notion of the infinite. But, in truth, I pity them when I think of the idea which they form of the incomprehensible Being. Theotimus was quite right when he said that men naturally *humanise* all things. Moreover, if all that they did was merely to incarnate, so to speak, the Divinity by endowing it with qualities which belonged to them—that would be pardonable. But there are some who deprive it of all the incomprehensible attributes and of all the characteristics which are essential to the infinitely perfect Being, with the exception of power; furthermore, they distribute the latter between it and what they call nature in such a way that, though they leave to God the best share, they rob Him of all means of exercising it.

THEOTIMUS. They do so, Aristes, for fear of tiring, or at any rate debasing, the Divine Majesty by petty tasks, by actions unworthy of His application and greatness. For we naturally believe that God would be content with the opinions we have of Him when we make Him such as we should like ourselves to be. Man is always moved by the inner feeling which he has of all that goes on in his own mind and heart. He cannot help but feel confusedly what he is and what he would desire to be. So he projects himself naturally into the objects of his knowledge and measures by the standard of humanity not only everything in his environment, but even the infinite substance of the Divine. It is true that the notion of the infinitely perfect Being is deeply impressed upon our mind. We never are without

thinking of Being. But so far from taking the vast and immense notion of Being without restriction for a standard whereby to estimate the Divinity which presents itself to us without ceasing, we take this immense notion as a pure fiction of the mind. This is the case, Aristes, because Being in general never strikes our senses, and because we judge of the reality and solidity of objects by the force with which they disturb us.

ARISTES. I understand all that quite well, Theotimus. It is precisely what Theodore told me seven or eight days ago. My mind can get no grip of the abstract ideas which you put before me. I am not sensuously affected by them. But I do not conclude from this that they are only phantoms. I believe that they are sublime truths, to which one can attain only by silencing one's imagination and senses, and by lifting oneself above oneself. And I am quite resolved in the future not to judge of God by myself, or by ideas which represent created things, but solely by the notion of the infinitely perfect Being. Please continue, Theodore, to question and instruct me.

X. THEODORE. Very well, let us continue. You believe that God is good, wise, just, merciful, patient, severe.

ARISTES. Gently. These terms are quite general; I mistrust them. I believe that God is wise, good, just, compassionate, and that He has all the other qualities which Scripture assigns to Him. But I do not know whether all who pronounce these words mean the same thing by them. The infinitely perfect Being is good, just, full of compassion. This seems to me obscure. Define these terms for me.

THEODORE. Oh, Aristes, you suspect a surprise. You do well. When one is philosophising over subtle and sublime matters, one must beware of ambiguities, and the commonest terms are not the most exempt from them. It is necessary then to define these words. But that is not so easy. Answer me first with regard to a matter which may help to render them clearer. Do you think that God knows and wills?

ARISTES. So far as that goes, yes. I do not doubt but that God knows and wills.

THEODORE. How is it that you have no doubt about it? Is it because you know and will yourself?

ARISTES. No, Theodore. It is because I recognise that know-

ing and willing are perfections. For, although I feel that I suffer, although I doubt, I am certain that God does not feel or doubt. And when I say that God knows and wills, I do not maintain that He does so in the manner of men. I maintain only that God wills and knows, and I leave it to you and Theotimus to explain the manner in which He wills and knows.

THEODORE. What do you mean by "the manner"? All the divine ways are incomprehensible. We do not know how we know ourselves, nor how we will; for having no clear idea of our soul, we cannot apprehend anything clearly in our own modifications. Still less, therefore, shall we be able to explain to you exactly the manner in which God knows or wills. Nevertheless, consult the notion of the infinitely perfect Being. See whether I am following it. For I tell you boldly that God is to Himself His own light, and that He discerns within His own substance the essences of all beings and all their possible modifications, and in His decrees He discerns their existence and all their actual modifications.

ARISTES. It seems to me that you are not venturing very far.

XI. THEODORE. I do not claim to do so either. But since you accept the principle, let us draw the conclusions that follow from it. God knows in Himself all that He knows. Hence all truths are in God, for, He being infinitely perfect, none can escape His knowledge. Hence His substance contains all intelligible relations, for truths are nothing but relations which are real, while falsities are relations which are imaginary. Hence God is not only wise, but Wisdom itself; not only does He know, but He is knowledge itself; not only is He illumined, but the light itself which illumines both Himself and all intelligences. For it is in His own light that you see what I see, and that He Himself sees what both of us see. I see that all the diameters of a circle are equal. I am certain that God Himself sees this, and that all minds either see it actually or are capable of seeing it. Yes, I am certain that God sees precisely the same thing as I see, the same truth, the same relation which I am aware of now as holding absolutely between 2 and 2 and 4. But God cannot see anything except in His substance. Hence this truth which I see I must see in Him. You know all that, Aristes, and have already agreed to it. Yet these principles escape us so easily, and they are

moreover of such great importance, that it is no loss of time to recall them to one's mind and to become familiar with them.

ARISTES. That then is one of the great differences between the way in which God knows and the way in which we know. God knows all things in Himself, and we know nothing in ourselves. We know nothing except in a substance which is not ours. God is wise through His own wisdom. We can become wise only through the union which we have with the wisdom which is eternal, immutable, necessary, common to all intelligences. For it is quite clear that a mind so limited as ours cannot find in its own substance the ideas or the archetype of all possible beings and of their infinite relations. Moreover, I am so certain that men, angels, and God Himself see the same truths which I see, that I can have no doubt as to whether it is the same light which illumines all minds.

XII. THEOTIMUS. Assuredly, Aristes, if God knows precisely what we see when we think that twice two are four, it is in God alone that we see this truth, for God sees it only in His own wisdom. Indeed, He only sees that we are thinking of it now in His decrees and in His eternity, for He does not derive His knowledge from what takes place actually in His creatures. But can we not say that minds do not see the same truths, but similar ones? God sees that twice two make four. You see it, I see it. We have here three similar truths, and not a single and unique truth.

ARISTES. We have here three similar perceptions of one and the same truth, but how can we have three similar truths? And who has told you that they are similar? Have you compared your ideas with mine, and with God's, in order to recognise their resemblance clearly? Who has told you that to-morrow, or that through all the centuries, you will see as you do to-day that twice two make four? Who has told you even that God cannot make minds capable of seeing clearly that twice two do not make four? Assuredly, you see the same truth as I, but you do so by means of a perception which is not mine, though perhaps it resembles mine. You see a truth which is common to all minds, but by means of a perception which belongs to you alone, for our perceptions, our feelings, our modifications are particular. You see a truth which is immutable, necessary, eternal. For you are so certain of the immutability of your

ideas that you have no fear lest you should find them to-morrow all changed. Since you know that they were before you, you are also assured that they will not disappear. But if your ideas are eternal and immutable, it is evident that they cannot have being except in the eternal and immutable substance of the Divine. That cannot be disputed. It is in God alone that we can see truth. In Him alone is the light which illumines Himself and all intelligences. He is wise through His own wisdom, but we cannot be wise except through our union with Him. Let us not dispute these principles. They are evident, it seems to me, and the ground of the certitude which we find in the sciences.

THEOTIMUS. I am very glad, Aristes, to see that you are convinced not only that the power of God is the efficient cause of our knowledge, for I believe that you do not doubt this, but also that His wisdom is the formal cause which illumines us immediately and without the intermediation of any created thing. I see quite well that Theodore has talked to you on this matter. I also owe to him what you have learnt from him, and which he says he learnt from St. Augustine.

THEODORE. We are all agreed, then, that God is infinitely wise, and this, essentially and in Himself, by the necessity of His being; that men can be wise only through the light of the divine wisdom; that this light is communicated to them in virtue of their attention, which is the occasional cause that determines the action of the general laws of the conjunction of their mind with the universal Reason, as we shall explain in the sequel. Let us prove now that God is just.

XIII. God contains in the simplicity of His being the ideas of all things and their infinite relations, generally all truths. Now, there may be distinguished in God two kinds of relations or truths, relations of magnitude and relations of perfection, speculative truths and practical truths, relations which call forth only judgments and others which in addition excite movements. Nevertheless, relations of perfection cannot be known clearly unless they are expressed in relations of magnitude. But we need not delay over this matter. Twice two are four is a relation of equality in magnitude, is a speculative truth which excites no movement in the soul, neither love nor hate, neither respect nor disdain. Man is of greater value than the beast, that is a relation of inequality in perfection which demands not merely that the soul should

accept it, but that our love and esteem should be regulated by the knowledge of this relation or truth. Observe then, God contains in Himself all relations of perfection. But He knows and loves all that He possesses in the simplicity of His own being. Hence, He esteems and loves everything in proportion as it is worthy of love and esteem. Invincibly He loves the immutable order which consists and can consist only in the relations of perfection which subsist between His attributes and between the ideas which He contains in His substance. He is, therefore, just in essence and through Himself. He cannot sin, for loving Himself invincibly He cannot but be just to His divine perfections, to all that He is, to all that He contains. He cannot even will positively and directly to produce any disorder in His work, for He esteems all things according to the degree of perfection of their archetypes. For example, He cannot without reason will that the mind shall be subject to the body; and if this is the case, it is because man is no longer such as God has made him. He cannot favour injustice; and if that is so, it is because the uniformity of His working must not depend on the irregularity of ours. The time of His vengeance will come. He cannot will anything that corrupts His work; and if there are monsters who disfigure it, it is because He does greater honour to His attributes by the simplicity and generality of His ways than by immunity from the defects which He permits in the universe, and which He produces therein in virtue of the general laws which He has established for the sake of better effects than the production of monsters, as we shall explain in the sequel. Thus, God is just in Himself, just in His ways, just essentially, because all His volitions necessarily conform to the immutable order of justice which He owes to Himself and to His divine perfections.

Man, on the other hand, is not just in himself. For as the immutable order of justice, which comprehends all the relations of perfection of all possible beings and their qualities, is only in God alone, and not in our own modifications, it would follow that if man loved himself by a movement of which he was himself the cause, so far from his self-love making him just, it would corrupt him infinitely more than the self-love of the wickedest of men. For there was never a soul so black and possessed by a self-love so irregular but that the beauty of the immutable order could move it on certain

occasions. We are, then, perfectly just only when, seeing in God what He sees within Himself, we judge of what we then see as God judges, and esteem and love what He esteems and loves. Hence, so far from being just through ourselves, we shall never be so until the time when, delivered from this body of ours which confuses all our ideas, we see without obscurity the eternal law in accordance with which we shall regulate in an exact manner all the judgments and movements of our heart. Not that we cannot say that those who have charity are truly just, though they often form very unjust judgments. They are just so far as the disposition of their heart is concerned. But they are not just in all strictness, because they do not know exactly all the relations of perfection which ought to regulate their esteem and love.

XIV. ARISTES. I understand, Theodore, from what you are saying now that justice as well as truth dwells, so to speak, eternally in an immutable nature. The just and the unjust, like the true and the false, are no inventions of the human mind as certain corrupt intellects maintain. Men, they say, have made laws for themselves for their mutual security. It is on the basis of self-interest that they made them. They have come to an agreement among themselves, and by that compact they are bound; for he who breaks the compact, being weaker than the rest, finds himself among enemies who will satisfy their self-interest in punishing him. Thus, through self-love a man is bound to obey the laws of the country in which he lives, not because they are just in themselves, but because in submitting to them he need have no fear of those who are stronger. According to these writers everything accrues to men by nature. Each man has a right to all things, and if I cede my right it is because I am obliged to do so by the force of the other competitors. Thus self-love is the rule of my actions. My law is an external power; and if I were the stronger I should re-enter naturally into the possession of all my rights. Can anyone say anything more brutish and senseless than this? Force has conferred upon the lion empire over the other brutes; and I admit that through it men often encroach upon one another. But to believe that this ought to be permitted, and that the strongest has a right to all things, without his ever being able to commit an injustice, is assuredly to put oneself on the level of animals,

and to make of human society an assemblage of brute beasts. Yes, Theodore, I agree that the immutable order of justice is a law with which even God never dispenses, and in accordance with which, it seems to me, all minds must regulate their conduct. God is just in essence and by the necessity of His being. But let us just see whether He is good, compassionate, patient. For it seems to me that all this can hardly be in accord with the severity of His justice.

XV. THEODORE. You are right, Aristes, God is neither good, compassionate, nor patient in the vulgar sense of these terms. These attributes as they are ordinarily understood are unworthy of the infinitely perfect Being. But God possesses these qualities in the sense which Reason indicates to us, and which Holy Scripture, which cannot contradict itself, leads us to believe. In order to explain this more distinctly, let us see whether God is essentially just in the sense that he necessarily rewards good deeds and punishes inevitably all those who offend Him, and who, so to speak, wound His attributes.

ARISTES. I see quite well, Theodore, that if created beings are capable of offending God, He will not fail to avenge Himself, loving Himself as He does by the necessity of His nature. But that God is capable of being offended seems to me inconceivable. And if that were possible, He would, since He loves Himself, necessarily never have given being to creatures who are capable of resisting Him, or at least He would never have given them the power or liberty to resist Him. Is not this evident?

THEODORE. You are raising a difficulty, Aristes, which will soon be cleared up. Follow me, pray, without forestalling me. Is it not clear from what I have just said that the immutable order is the law of God, the inviolable rule of His will, and that He cannot prevent Himself from loving things in proportion as they are worthy of love?

ARISTES. That is what you have just demonstrated.

THEODORE. It follows that God cannot will that His creatures should not love in accordance with His immutable order. He cannot exempt them from following this law. He cannot will that we should love best what least deserves to be loved. What! you hesitate? Does not this seem to you certain?

ARISTES. I find some difficulty in it. I am convinced by a kind of inner feeling that God cannot will that one should

esteem and love best that which deserves least to be loved or esteemed. But I do not see it quite clearly. For what does our love and esteem matter to God? Nothing at all. *We* perhaps wish to be esteemed or loved because we have need of each other. But God is so far above His creatures that He apparently takes no interest in the opinions which we entertain of Him and of His works. This has at least some plausibility.

THEODORE. It has but too much for corrupt minds. It is true, Aristes, that God is not afraid of and hopes for nothing from our opinions. He is independent and abundantly sufficient unto Himself. Nevertheless, He necessarily takes an interest in our judgments and the movements of our heart. And here is the proof of it. All minds are possessed of a will, and are capable of willing or loving only because of the natural and irresistible movement towards the Good which God incessantly impresses upon them. Now, God acts upon us only because He wills to do so, and He can will thus to act only through His will, only through the love which He bears towards Himself and His divine perfections. And it is the order of these divine perfections which, strictly speaking, constitutes His law, since He is just essentially and by the necessity of His being, as I have just proved to you. He cannot, therefore, will that our love, which is but the effect of His love, should be contrary to His, or should tend towards that to which His love does not tend. He cannot desire us to love that best which is least worthy of love. He necessarily wills the immutable order which is His natural law to be likewise our law. From this law He can neither exempt Himself nor us. And, since He has so made us as to leave us the choice whether to follow or not to follow this natural and indispensable law, it follows that we are capable of being punished or rewarded. Yes, Aristes, if we are free, it proves that we can be happy or unhappy; and if we are capable of happiness and unhappiness, the fact affords a certain proof of our freedom. A man whose heart is disordered through the bad use he makes of his liberty comes under the order of justice which God owes to His divine perfections, if this sinner is unhappy in exact proportion to his unruliness. Now, God loves order irresistibly. Therefore, He inevitably punishes those who offend against it. Not that the sinner offends against God in the sense in which one man offends against another,

not that God punishes him out of the pleasure which He takes in vengeance; but God can act only in accordance with what He is, in accordance with the requirements of the immutable order of the necessary relations of all that he contains, of that order whose character the arrangements of the parts of the universe must bear. Thus, God is not indifferent in regard to the punishment of our sins. He is neither merciful nor compassionate, nor good, in the vulgar sense of these ideas; He is just in essence and out of the natural and necessary love which He bears towards His divine perfections. He can delay reward and punishment according as the order of His providence demands or allows—an order which ordinarily compels Him to follow the general laws which He has established to govern the world in a way which shall bear the character of His attributes. But He cannot exempt Himself from paying men sooner or later according to their deeds. God is good to the good, bad, so to speak, to the bad, as it is written: "Cum electo electus eris, et cum perverso perverteris." He is kind and compassionate, but He is so in His Son and through His Son. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He is good to sinners in the sense that through Jesus Christ He gives them the grace necessary for changing the evil inclinations of their heart, so that they should cease to be sinners, so that they should do good deeds, and that they, having become good and just, He might be gracious towards them, forgive them their sins, in view of the atonement of Jesus Christ, and to crown His own gifts, or the merits which they will have won through the good use of His grace. But God is always severe, always strictly observant of eternal laws, always acting in accordance with what He is, in accordance with the requirements of His own attributes, or that immutable order of the necessary relations of the divine perfections contained in the substance which He loves irresistibly and by the necessity of His own being. All this, Aristes, is in accordance with Scripture no less than with the notion which all men have of the infinitely perfect Being, though it is by no means in accordance with the gross ideas of those stupid and hardened sinners who want a God compliant and indulgent like a man, or a God who should not interfere in our affairs and should be indifferent to the life which we lead.

ARISTES. I do not think these truths can be doubted.

THEODORE. Think them over carefully, so that you may remain convinced of them, not only through a kind of inner feeling by the aid of which God inculcates these truths in all those whose heart is not entirely hardened and corrupted, but still more by evidence of such a character that you could use it to convince those rare geniuses who believe themselves to have found in the love of self the true principles of natural morality.

NINTH DIALOGUE

God always acts in accordance with His nature—He has created all things for the sake of His glory in Jesus Christ, and He did not form His designs without prior regard to the ways of their realisation.

I. THEODORE. What do you think to-day, Aristes, of what we were talking of yesterday? Have you been contemplating the notion of the Infinite, the Being without limitation, the infinitely perfect Being, and can you now envisage it in all its purity without clothing it with ideas that belong to the world of created things, without embodying it, so to speak, without limiting it or corrupting it, so as to adapt it to the weakness of the human mind?

ARISTES. Ah, Theodore! How difficult it is to separate the notion of Being in general from the ideas of particular finite beings! How difficult it is not to attribute to God anything of that one feels in oneself! We are always ascribing human attributes to God; naturally we tend to limit the Infinite. That is so because the mind seeks to comprehend the incomprehensible; it would see the invisible God. The mind looks for the incomprehensible in the ideas of created beings, and stops short with the feelings affecting and penetrating it. But how far all this is from really representing the Divine, and what strange opinions about the attributes of God and His adorable Providence do those people form, who judge of the divine perfections by the inner feeling which they have of what takes place in themselves. I can understand vaguely what you are saying, but not sufficiently to make it quite clear to myself.

THEODORE. You have been meditating, Aristes. I can see that by your answer. You understand that in order to judge rightly of the divine attributes and of the rules of Providence it is necessary ever to keep apart from the notion of Being the ideas of particular beings and never to consult one's inner feelings. That is sufficient. Let us continue our journey, and

take care, all the three of us, lest we strike against the dangerous rock of judging of the Infinite by means of notions adapted only to the finite.

ARISTES. We are sure to do so, Theodore, for all the currents tend that way. That I have fully realised since yesterday.

THEODORE. That is so, Aristes, but perhaps we shall escape being wrecked. At any rate, let us not strike against the rocks recklessly, as most men do. I hope that through our mutual vigilance we shall avoid a large number of dangerous errors into which men fall blindly. Let us not give our natural laziness so much credit, Aristes. Courage! Our common Master, who is the Author of our Faith, will grant us some understanding of it, if we but interrogate Him earnestly and with the respect and submission which is due to His word, and to the infallible authority of His Church. Let us begin then.

II. Yesterday you agreed that God knew and willed, not because we know and will, but because knowing and willing are veritable perfections. What do you think about this now? To-day I mean to consider the Divine in its "ways" and as going out of itself, so to speak, as adopting the plan of externalising itself in the production of its creations. Thus it is important to be sure that God knows and wills, since without this assurance it is impossible to understand how He could produce anything in the external world. For how would He act wisely without knowledge? How could He make the universe without willing to do so? Do you then believe, Aristes, that He who is self-sufficient is capable of forming any desire?

ARISTES. You are questioning me in such a way as to raise within me ever new doubts. I see quite well that you do this because you do not wish to take me by surprise, nor to leave to prejudices any chance of retreat. Very well then, Theodore, I do not doubt that God knows, but I do doubt whether He can ever will anything or whether He ever has willed anything; for what could He will, He who is fully sufficient unto Himself? We will, we human creatures, but the fact that we will is a sure sign of our poverty. Not having what we need, we desire it. But the infinitely perfect Being can will nothing, desire nothing, since He sees quite well that He is in want of nothing.

THEODORE. Oh! oh! Aristes, you surprise me. God can will nothing! But how so? Can the infinitely perfect Being have

created us despite Himself, and without having willed our creation? We are or exist, Aristes, this fact is indisputable.

ARISTES. Yes, we are, but we are not made. Our nature is eternal. We are a necessary emanation from the Divine. We form a part of the divine Being. The infinitely perfect Being is the universe, is the assemblage of all that is.

THEODORE. Indeed!

ARISTES. Do not suppose, Theodore, that I am impious and foolish enough to yield to these dreams? But I should very much like you to show me how to refute them, for I have heard there are some people sufficiently corrupted to allow themselves to be fascinated by them.

THEODORE. I do not know, Aristes, whether all that we hear just now of certain people is quite accurate, and whether those ancient philosophers who have held the opinion which you are putting before me have ever really believed it to be true. For though there are few extravagances of which men are incapable, I would willingly believe that those who produce such chimeras do not really believe in them, for, after all, the author who has renewed this impiety agrees that God is the infinitely perfect Being. And that being so, how could he have believed that all created beings are but parts or modifications of the Divine? Is it a perfection to be unjust in one's parts, unhappy in one's modifications, ignorant, foolish, impious? There are more sinners than good people, more idolaters than believers. What disorder, what a conflict between the divine Being and its parts! What a monstrous, frightful, and ridiculous chimera this is! A God of necessity hated, blasphemed, despised, or at least ignored by the majority of all beings! For how many people would ever think of recognising such a divinity? A God of necessity, unhappy or unfeeling, throughout the greater number of His parts or modifications, a God who punishes Himself, and avenges Himself upon Himself—in a word, an infinitely perfect Being, who is nevertheless composed of all the disorders in the universe! What theory can more obviously be declared self-contradictory? Assuredly, if there are people who can make unto themselves a God on the basis of so monstrous an idea, then either they do not want to see, or they are minds born to look for the properties of a triangle in the idea of a circle. Believe me, Aristes, no man of good sense has ever been convinced by such a craze, though several persons have maintained it as though they were convinced

by it, for self-love is so whimsical that it may encourage us to confide such views to our boon companions and to appear to be convinced of them. But it is impossible to believe it true, however little ability one has for argument, and however little one has learnt to fear error. Those who maintain this view cannot inwardly have been convinced of it unless the corruption of their heart has made them so blind that it would be a loss of time to attempt the task of enlightening them. Let us return to our subject then.

III. We are; this fact is indisputable. God is infinitely perfect. Consequently, we are dependent upon Him. We do not exist despite of Him; we exist only because He willed that we should have being. But how could God will that we should have being, seeing that He has no need of us? How can a being who lacks nothing, who is fully self-sufficient, will anything? That is the difficulty.

ARISTES. It seems to me that this difficulty may be easily met, for we need only say that God has created the world, not for Himself but for us.

THEODORE. But what about ourselves, for whom did He create us?

ARISTES. For Himself.

THEODORE. The difficulty recurs, for God has no need of us.

ARISTES. Let us say then that God has created us, out of nothing but pure kindness, or pure charity towards us.

THEODORE. Let us not say that, at least not without explanation, for it seems to me evident that the infinitely perfect Being loves Himself infinitely, necessarily, that His will is but the love which He bears towards Himself and His divine perfections, that the movement of His love cannot, as is the case with ourselves, come to Him from the outside, nor consequently lead Him outside Himself; and that, being Himself the principle of His action, it follows that He alone must be the end or aim of that action; in a word, that in God any love other than self-love would be irregular and contrary to the immutable order which He contains, and which is the inviolable law of the divine volition. We can say that God has made us out of pure kindness in the sense that He has made us without having need of us. But He has made us for Himself, for God can will nothing except

by His will, and His will is but the love which He bears towards Himself. The reason, the motive, the end of His decrees can be found in Himself alone.

ARISTES. I find some difficulty in yielding to your arguments, though they appear to me evident.

THEOTIMUS. Do you not see, Aristes, that to look for the motives and ends of His actions outside Himself means to anthropomorphise God? But if this thought of yours, of making God act solely from pure kindness, attracts you so much, how comes it that the number of reprobates is twenty times or a hundred times larger than that of the elect?

ARISTES. That is due to the Fall.

THEOTIMUS. Yes; but how is it that God did not prevent a Fall fraught with so much sorrow for the creatures whom He has made, and made out of pure kindness?

ARISTES. He had His reasons.

THEOTIMUS. God then has within Himself good reasons for all that He does, which reasons do not always harmonise with a certain idea of kindness and charity which is very pleasant for our self-love, but which is contrary to the divine law, to that immutable order which contains all the good reasons which God may have.

ARISTES. But, Theotimus, since God is fully self-sufficient, why should He adopt the plan of creating this world?

THEOTIMUS. God has His reasons, end and motive, all within Himself. For, prior to His decrees, what could there have been which was capable of determining Him to make them? Since God is fully self-sufficient, it was with entire liberty that He determined Himself to create the world, for if God wanted His creatures, loving Himself irresistibly as He does, he would of necessity produce them. Yes, Aristes, all that may be legitimately inferred from the self-sufficiency of God is that the world is no necessary emanation from the divine Being—which fact faith teaches us. But to imagine that the divine abundance can render God impotent is to go against an obvious fact, and to deprive the Creator of the glory which He derives eternally from His creatures.

IV. ARISTES. How so, Theotimus? Has God created the world because of the glory which He might derive from it? If this glory had been the motive which determined the Creator,

we should have a strange thing indeed determining God to act. How is it that God should have deprived Himself of this glory throughout an eternity? Moreover, you say "glory." What do you mean by this word? Assuredly, Theotimus, you have ventured upon a path beset with difficulties.

THEOTIMUS. The path is difficult. But Theodore, who has followed it successfully, will not leave me entangled in it.

ARISTES. What, Theodore, God has made the universe for His glory! You approve of a thought so anthropomorphic, so unworthy of the infinitely perfect Being. Do speak again, I beg you, instead of Theotimus. Explain yourself.

THEODORE. It is at this point, Aristes, that much attention and vigilance is necessary in order to avoid the rock you know of. Take care lest I strike against it. When an architect has constructed a commodious building and one architecturally excellent, he experiences a secret satisfaction because his work testifies to the skill of his art. Thus one can say that the beauty of his work does him honour because it bears the character of the qualities which he esteems and loves, and which he is glad to possess. If, in addition, someone happens to stop in order to contemplate his building and to admire its arrangement and its proportions, the architect derives from this a second glory, which is still mainly founded on the esteem and love which he has for the qualities he possesses, and which he would be glad to possess in a more eminent degree; for if he believed that the quality of being an architect was unworthy of him, if he despised this art or science, his work would cease to be an honour to him, and those who praised him for having constructed it would merely upset him.

ARISTES. Take care, Theodore, you are going right against the rock.

THEODORE. All this is merely by way of analogy; follow me. It is certain that God loves Himself and all His qualities necessarily. Now, it is clear that He cannot act except in accordance with what He is. Therefore His work, since it bears the character of His attributes in which He glories, does Him honour. Esteeming and loving Himself irresistibly as He does, God finds His glory and His satisfaction in a work which in some way expresses His excellent qualities.

This, then, is one of the senses in which God may be said to act for the sake of His glory. And, as you will see, the glory is

not foreign to Him, for it is based upon nothing but the esteem and love which He has for His own qualities. Let there exist no intelligent spirits to admire His work, let there exist none but foolish and stupid men who do not discover its wonders, let these, on the contrary, despise this wonderful work, let them blaspheme it, let them look upon it because of the monstrosities they find therein, as the necessary effect of a blind nature, let them be scandalised at seeing innocence oppressed and injustice upon the throne ; God will not enjoy less of that glory for the sake of which He acts, of that glory which has as its principle the love and esteem which He has for His qualities, of that glory which ever determines Him to act in accordance with what He is, or in a way which bears the character of His attributes. Thus, granted that God wills to act, He cannot but act for the sake of His glory, in this first sense, since He cannot but act in accord with what He is, and through the love which He bears towards Himself and His divine perfections. But, as He is self-sufficient, this glory cannot determine Him irresistibly to will to act, and I even believe that this glory alone cannot be a motive sufficient to make Him act, unless He discover also the secret of rendering His work divine, and in harmony with His action which is divine. For, after all, the universe, however grand, however perfect it may be, is still finite, is still unworthy of the action of a God whose worth is infinite. God will not, therefore, adopt the plan of producing it. That to my mind is the greatest difficulty.

ARISTES. Why, Theodore ? It is easy to solve this difficulty. Let us make the world infinite. Let us make it consist of an infinite number of vortices ; for why should we imagine a vast heaven surrounding all else and beyond which there is nothing ?

THEODORE. No, Aristes. Let us leave to created things the character which is suited for them, let us give them nothing which approximates to the divine attributes. But let us endeavour nevertheless to rescue the universe from its profane state and to render it by aid of something divine worthy of the divine satisfaction, worthy of the action of a God whose worth is infinite.

ARISTES. How can we do this ?

THEODORE. Through union with a divine Personality.

ARISTES. Ah, Theodore, you always resort to the truths of faith to get out of a difficulty. That is not philosophical.

V. THEODORE. What do you want, Aristes? I do so because it is by means of them that I find a way out, and because without them I can find no solution for thousands upon thousands of difficulties. What then! Is not the universe, sanctified by Jesus Christ and subsisting in Him, so to speak, more divine, more worthy of the action of God, than all your infinite vortices?

ARISTES. Yes, beyond a doubt. But if man had not sinned, the Word would not have taken bodily form.

THEODORE. I know not, Aristes. But even if man had not sinned, a divine Person would not on that account have failed to conjoin Himself with the universe in order to sanctify it, to rescue it from its profane state, to render it divine, to endow it with an infinite dignity in order that God, who can act only for the sake of His glory, should receive from it a glory which corresponds perfectly to His action. Cannot the Word become conjoined with God's work without being incarnate? He made Himself a man, but could He not have made Himself an angel? It is true that in making Himself a man He conjoined Himself at the same time with the two substances, mind and body, of which the universe is composed, and through this union He sanctified the whole of nature. In view of this consideration I do not know whether the Fall was the only cause of the Incarnation of the Son of God. For He could have bestowed upon angels the grace which He bestowed upon man. Moreover, God foresaw, and He permitted the Fall. That is enough, for it proves with certainty that the world as saved by Jesus Christ is of greater worth than the same universe as at first constructed, otherwise God would never have allowed His work to have become corrupted. It indicates most certainly that the main design of God was the incarnation of His Son. Let us see then, Aristes, in what way God acts for the sake of His glory. Let us justify this proposition, which has seemed to you so poor and perhaps as devoid of sense and untenable.

VI. In the first place, God thinks of a work which through its excellence and beauty should express qualities that He loves irresistibly, and which He is glad to have. But this, nevertheless, is not sufficient to induce Him to adopt the plan of producing it, because a finite and profane world, not having as yet anything divine in it, can have no relation to His action which is divine. What does He do? He makes it divine by means of union

with a divine Person. And through the union he elevates it infinitely and receives from it, mainly in consequence of the divinity which He communicates to it, this first glory, which is akin to the glory of the architect who has built a house which does him honour because it possesses qualities which he is proud to possess. God receives, I say, this first glory, illumined, so to speak, with an infinite brilliance. Nevertheless, it is from Himself alone that He derives the glory which He receives from the sanctification of His Church, or from that spiritual edifice of which we are the living stones, sanctified by Jesus Christ.

In the second place, this Architect receives a second glory from the spectators and admirers of His building, and it is perhaps through contemplation of this kind of glory that He has endeavoured to make it as magnificent and superb as lay within His power. It is also in view of the worship which our sovereign Priest was to establish for the honour of God that He resolved to make unto Himself a temple wherein He would be eternally glorified. Yes, vile and despicable creatures as we are, we render, through our divine Head, and shall render eternally, divine honours to God, honours worthy of the divine Majesty, honours which God received and will always receive with pleasure. Our adoration and our praise are to Jesus Christ sacrifices of good odour. God takes pleasure in these spiritual and divine sacrifices, and if He has repented having established a carnal creed, and having made man,[1] He has sworn by Himself that He will never repent having saved him, having sanctified him, having made us all priests under our supreme Pontiff, the true Melchisedec.[2] God looks upon us in Jesus Christ as gods, as His children, as His heirs and co-heirs of His well-beloved Son.[3] He has adopted us in this dear Son, it is through Him that He has given us access to His Supreme Majesty, it is through Him that He feels satisfaction in His work, it is through this secret that He has found in His wisdom that He goes out of Himself, that He goes, if it be permissible to speak thus, out of the sanctity which separates Him infinitely from all creatures, that He goes out, I say, with a magnificence from which He derives a glory capable of satisfying Himself. The Man-God precedes Him always in His ways, and justifies all His designs and through His creatures causes honours to be paid Him, wherewith He might be content. Jesus Christ

[1] Heb. vii. 20, 21; vi. 17. [2] 1 Pet. ii. 9.
[3] John iii. 1–22; Rom. viii. 16, 17.

appeared only in the fulness of time, but He existed throughout all the generations in the designs of the Creator, and when He was born in Bethlehem, then God was glorified, then God was satisfied with His work. All blessed spirits recognised this truth when the angels announced the birth of the Saviour to the shepherds. "Glory to God," they said in common accord, "peace on earth, God is well pleased with mankind." [1] Yes, assuredly, the incarnation of the Word is the first and foremost of God's designs, it is that which justifies His action, it is that which, unless I am mistaken, is the solution of thousands upon thousands of difficulties, of thousands upon thousands of apparent contradictions.[2]

Man, Aristes, is a sinner, he is not such as God has made him. God, then, has allowed His work to become corrupt. Harmonise this with His wisdon and His power, save yourself from the difficulty without the aid of the Man-God, without admitting a Mediator, without granting that God has had mainly in view the incarnation of His Son. I defy you to do it even with the principles of the best philosophy. As for myself, I find myself at a loss at every moment, whenever I endeavour to philosophise without the aid of faith. It is faith alone that can guide me and sustain me in my researches into the truths having any reference to God, as the truths of metaphysics have; for so far as mathematical truths are concerned, which estimate quantities, numbers, times, movements, all things that differ merely from the point of view of "more or less," I agree that faith does not help us to discover them, and that experience together with reason are sufficient for the attainment of knowledge of all the parts of physics.

VII. ARISTES. I fully understand what you are saying, Theodore, and I find it quite in conformity with reason. Indeed, I rejoice inwardly that in following our faith we are able to attain to an understanding of those truths which St. Paul teaches us in several parts of his admirable epistles. But two minor difficulties suggest themselves to my mind. The first is, that it seems that God was not perfectly free in the production of His work, since He derives from it a glory which is infinite, and which satisfies Him so intensely; the second is, that at any rate He ought not to have deprived Himself for an eternity

[1] Luke ii. 14.

[2] *Traité de la Nature et de la Grâce*, Discours i. and *Éclaircissements*, ii. and iii.

of that satisfaction which He has in seeing Himself so divinely honoured by His creatures.

THEODORE. My reply to you is, Aristes, that the infinitely perfect Being is fully self-sufficient, and that therefore He loves necessarily only His own substance, only His divine perfections. That is evident and is sufficient to meet your first difficulty. But, as to the second, observe that God is bound never to do anything which belies His qualities, and that He is bound to leave upon all creatures who are essentially dependent the marks of their dependence. Now, the essential character of the dependent is the fact that it has not always existed. An eternal world appears to be a necessary emanation from the divine Being. God had to give an indication that He is so self-sufficient that throughout an eternity He was able to dispense with His work. Through Jesus Christ He derives from it a glory which satisfies Him, but He would not receive this glory if the incarnation had been eternal, because such an eternal incarnation would imply a defect in those attributes which it ought to glorify as much as possible.

ARISTES. I admit, Theodore, that none but a necessary and independent Being can be eternal. It is right that all that is not God should bear the essential mark of its dependence; that appears to be evident. But God could, without making the world eternal, have created it sooner than He has done by a thousand millions of centuries. Why then delay so long a work wherefrom He derives so much glory?

THEODORE. He did not delay it, Aristes. Soon and late are properties of time which have no relation to eternity. If the world had been created a thousand million centuries before it actually was created, we could still have confronted you with the same question, and so repeatedly *ad infinitum*. Thus God did not create the world too late, seeing that an eternity had to pass away before it came into existence, and that a difference of a thousand million centuries is of no significance when compared with eternity.

ARISTES. I do not know how to reply to you, Theodore; I shall think over what you have just told me, viz. that God acts only for the sake of His glory, only for the love which He bears towards Himself, for I can see that this principle carries with it a number of consequences. But what do you think about it, Theotimus?

VIII. THEOTIMUS. This principle seems to me indisputable, for it is evident that the infinitely perfect Being can find in nothing but Himself the motive of His volitions and the reasons for His action. But I feel that I could wish that God loved us a little more, so that He did something solely for His love of us, for after all Scripture teaches us that God loved us so much that He gave us His only Son. That was a great gift, Aristes, and one which seems to me to indicate rather more disinterested love than the love which Theodore attributes to Him.

ARISTES. Well, Theodore, what do you say to that?

THEODORE. That Theotimus is striking against the rock, or rather that he feels himself in the current which drives him thereto, unless perhaps he wishes to see what your opinion is.

ARISTES. That is not a reply.

THEODORE. I do not reply because I should very much like you to do so; but since you wish to say nothing, at least make some effort to understand my meaning. I believe, Aristes, that God loved us so much that He has given us His only Son, as we are told in Scripture,[1] but I believe also what the same Scripture teaches me, that He loved His Son so much that He has given us to Him as well as all the nations of the earth.[2] Finally, I believe too, because of what I am taught in Scripture, that if He has predestined us to His Son, and if He has chosen His Son for the first of His predestined ones, it is because He willed to make Him His Pontiff, in order to receive from Him, and through Him from us, the adoration which is His due,[3] for this in a few words is the order of things: All belongs to us, we belong to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ belongs to God; "things present or things to come," said St Paul, "all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."[4] That is so because God is necessarily the end of all His works. You must distinctly understand, Aristes, that God loves all things in proportion as they are worthy of love, that the law which He follows inviolably is nothing but the immutable order, which I have told you several times can consist in nothing but the necessary relations among the divine perfections. In a word, you must understand that God acts according to what He is, and you will then see without difficulty that He loves us so much that He does for us all that He can do. Acting as He is

[1] John iii 16. [2] Ps. ii. 8. [3] Matt. xxviii. 18; Eph. i. [4] 1 Cor iii. 22, 23.

bound to act, you will understand that God loves the natures that He has made to the extent to which they are as He has made them, that He loves them, I say, according to the degree of perfection which their archetype possesses, and that He will give them happiness in proportion to the rewards they merit by conforming to His law. You will understand that at first God created man righteous and without fault, and that if He made Him free, it was because He willed to make him happy without detriment to what he owes to Himself. You will gladly believe that God can still love men who have become sinners and are therefore deserving of the divine anger with so much charity and lovingkindness as to send His Son to deliver them from their sins. You will not doubt that God cherishes men, sanctified by Jesus Christ, so much that He has given them a share of His heritage and of His eternal felicity. But you will never understand how God can act solely for the sake of His creatures or in an impulse of pure kindness, the motive of which His reason does not discover in the divine attributes. Once again, God need not act, but if He does act, He cannot but regulate Himself in accordance with what He is, in accordance with the laws which He finds in His substance. He can love men, but only because of the relation in which they stand to Him. He finds in the beauty which the archetype of His work contains a motive for its realisation, but that is so because this beauty does Him honour, because it possesses qualities in which He glories, and which He is glad to possess. Thus the love which God has for us is not interested in the sense that He has need of us, but it is interested in the sense that He loves us only by the love which He bears towards Himself, and to His Divine perfections, which we give expression to in our nature (this is the first glory which all beings of necessity render to their author), and which we adore in judgments and actions which are their due. This is the second glory which we render to God through our sovereign Priest, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

THEOTIMUS. All this, Theodore, seems to me sufficiently explained. The infinitely perfect Being is fully self-sufficient; this is one of the names which God gives Himself in Scripture, and nevertheless He has made all things for Himself. "The Lord hath made all things for Himself."[1] He has made all

[1] Prov xvi. 4.

things in Jesus Christ, and through Jesus Christ "all things were created by Him and for Him";[1] all for the glory which He deserves from His Church in Jesus Christ; "unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end."[2] The Epistles of St. Paul are all full of these truths. Therein is the foundation of our religion, and you have shown us that there is nothing more in conformity with reason and with the most exact notion of the infinitely perfect Being. Let us proceed to something else. I hope that when Aristes has given this matter full consideration he will become convinced of the truth of what I have said.

ARISTES. I am persuaded of the truth of it already, Theotimus. It is not my fault that Theodore does not follow up the principle in its further applications.

IX. THEODORE. Let us endeavour, Aristes, to understand the more general principles thoroughly. For afterwards the rest will follow by itself, all will unfold itself to the mind in orderly fashion and with a wonderful clearness. Let us then try to discover further from the notion of the infinitely perfect Being what God's designs could be. I do not mean to say that we can discover them in detail, but perhaps we may be able to recognise the most general of them, and you will see from the sequel that the little that we have already discovered will be of great use to us. Do you not think, then, that God would will to produce the most beautiful and the most perfect work possible?

ARISTES. Yes, without a doubt, for the more perfect His work, the more will it express the qualities and perfections in which God glories. This evidently follows from what you have just said.

THEODORE. The universe then is the most perfect that God could make? How can that be? Do all these monstrosities, all these disorders, this large number of infidels, contribute to the perfection of the universe?

ARISTES. You disconcert me, Theodore. God wills to produce the most perfect world possible, for the more perfect it is the more it will honour Him. This seems to be evident, but I see quite well that it would be a more finished production if it were free from thousands upon thousands of faults which

[1] Col. i. 16. [2] Eph. iii. 21.

disfigure it. We have here a contradiction which cuts me short. It would seem that God did not accomplish His design, or that He did not adopt that design, which was most worthy of His attributes.

THEODORE. You think so because you have not yet sufficiently understood its principles. You have not meditated enough upon the notion of the infinitely perfect Being which contains these principles. You do not yet understand how to make God act in accordance with what He is.

THEOTIMUS. But, Aristes, may it not be that the irregularities of nature, the monstrosities and even the infidels are as the shadow of a picture which give force to the work and relief to the figures?

ARISTES. This idea has something in it which pleases the imagination, but it does not satisfy the intellect. For I understand quite clearly that the universe would be more perfect if it had nothing irregular in any of the parts which compose it, and on the contrary there is hardly any portion of it in which there is not some fault.

THEOTIMUS. Must we hold, then, that God does not will His work to be perfect?

ARISTES. That cannot be so either, for God cannot desire positively and directly irregularities which disfigure His work, and which do not express any of the perfections which He possesses and in which He glories. This seems to me evident. God permits the disorder, but He does not produce it, He does not will it.

THEOTIMUS. "God permits." I do not understand this term. To whom is it that God gives permission to freeze the vines and to ruin the harvests which He has caused to grow? Why does He permit the admission into His work of monstrosities which He does not produce and which He does not will? Or is the universe not such as God has willed it to be?

ARISTES. No, for the universe is not such as God made it.

THEOTIMUS. That seems to be true with regard to the disorder which has crept into it through the bad use we make of our freedom, for God has made no infidels. He only permits men to search after Him. I understand this, though I do not know the reason of it. But assuredly none but God has produced the monstrosities that we find.

ARISTES. Monsters ars indeed strange creatures, if they

do not render honour to Him who gave them being. Do you know, Theotimus, why God, who to-day covers the whole country with flowers and fruit, will ravage it to-morrow with frost and hail?

THEOTIMUS. Because the country will be more beautiful in a barren state than in a fruitful one, though this does not suit us. We often judge of the beauty of God's works by the use which we make of them, and we fall into error.

ARISTES. Still, it is better to judge of them by their utility than by their inutility. Beautiful, indeed, is a country destroyed by a storm!

THEOTIMUS. Very beautiful. A country inhabited by sinners ought to be in desolation.

ARISTES. If the storm spared the lands of good people, you would perhaps be right. Even then it would be more to the purpose to refuse rain to the field of a brute than to make his wheat spring up and grow, only in order to cut it down by a hailstorm. This assuredly would be the shortest road. But it is often rather the least guilty who are treated worst. What apparent contradictions in God's action! Theodore has already taught me principles by the aid of which these contradictions can be removed, but I have understood them so badly that I no longer remember them. If you do not want to lead me into the right path, Theotimus, for I see that you are amusing yourself at my expense, allow Theodore to speak.

THEOTIMUS. That is fair.

X. THEODORE. You see quite well, Aristes, that it is not enough to have half seen these principles, it is necessary to master them in order that they should suggest themselves to the mind when needed. Listen then, since Theotimus does not want to tell you what he knows perfectly well.

You are not mistaken in believing that the more perfect a work is, the more it expresses the perfections of its maker, and that the work does Him the greater honour the more the perfections which it expresses please Him who possesses them, and that therefore God would desire to make His work as perfect as possible. But you have grasped but half of this principle, and it is on this account that you are in an awkward position. God wills that His work should do Him honour, this you understand well enough. Yet observe, God does not will that His ways

should dishonour Him. This is the other half of the principle. God wills that His action just like His work should bear the character of His attributes. Not content that the universe should honour Him by its excellence and beauty, He wills that His ways should glorify Him in their simplicity, fruitfulness, universality, uniformity, and all the characteristics which express qualities in the possession of which He glories. Do not, therefore, imagine that God willed to create the most perfect world possible, but merely the most perfect in relation to the ways most worthy of Him, for what God wills simply, directly, and absolutely in His designs is always to act in as divine a manner as possible, to make His procedure as well as His work bear the character of His attributes, to act exactly in accordance with what He is and with all that He is. From all eternity God has seen all the possible worlds and all the possible ways in which each of them could be produced; and, as He acts only for the sake of His glory, only in accordance with what He is, He has resolved to will that work which could be produced in ways which in conjunction with the work should honour Him more than any other world produced in any other way. He has formed a plan which is to bear, pre-eminently, the character of His attributes, which is to express exactly the qualities which He possesses, and which He glories in possessing. Grasp this principle firmly, my dear Aristes, lest it should escape you, for of all principles it is perhaps the most fruitful.

Furthermore, do not imagine that God ever makes a plan blindly, I mean without having compared it with the methods or means necessary for its execution. In this way men act who are often sorry that they have made certain resolutions because of the difficulties which they encounter thereby. To God nothing is difficult; but observe, all things are not equally worthy of Him. His ways must bear the character of His attributes no less than His work. It follows that God must attend to the ways as well as to the work. It is not sufficient that His work should honour Him by its excellence; it is necessary, in addition, that His ways should glorify Him by their divinity. And if a world more perfect than ours could not be created and maintained except by ways which were conversely less perfect, so that the expression, so to speak, which this new world and its new ways would give to the divine qualities would be less than that of our world, I do not fear to say that God is too wise, loves His

glory too much, acts too exactly in accordance with what He is, to be able to give it the preference to the world which He has created; for God is indifferent in His plans only when they are equally wise, equally divine, equally glorious, equally worthy of His attributes, only when the relation consisting in the beauty of the work and the simplicity of the ways is exactly equal. When the relation is not equal, though God may do nothing at all because He is self-sufficient, He yet cannot choose and adopt the inferior course. He has the power not to act, but He cannot act uselessly, nor can He multiply His ways without at the same time increasing His glory. His wisdom forbids Him to adopt that one out of all the possible designs which is not the wisest. The love which He bears towards Himself does not permit Him to choose that which does not honour Him most truly.

XI. ARISTES. I quite grasp your principle, Theodore. God acts only in accordance with what He is, only in a way which bears the character of His attributes, only for the sake of the glory which He finds in the relation which His work and His ways jointly have to the perfections which He possesses and in the possession of which He glories. It is the grandeur of this relation that God considers in framing His designs; for this is the principle: God can act only in accordance with what He is, and can will absolutely and directly only for the sake of His glory. If the defects of the universe, wherein we dwell, diminish this relation, the simplicity, fruitfulness and wisdom of its ways and laws which God follows increase it all the more. A world more perfect, but produced in ways less fruitful and less simple, would not bear to the same extent as ours the character of the divine attributes. This is why the world is full of infidels, monstrosities, disorder of all kinds. God could convert all men, render impossible all disorders; but in order to accomplish this He must not disturb the simplicity and uniformity of His action, for He is bound to honour it by the wisdom of His ways as well as by the perfection of His creatures. He does not *permit* monstrosities, He makes them. But He makes them only in order not to change anything in His procedure and only out of respect for the generality of His ways, only in order to follow exactly the natural laws which He has established and which nevertheless He has not established because of the monstrous effects which they are wont to produce,

but for effects more worthy of His wisdom and lovingkindness. That is why one can say that He permits them, though none but He is responsible for their production. For He wills them only indirectly, only because they are a natural consequence of His laws.

THEODORE. How prompt you are in drawing conclusions!

ARISTES. I can do so because the principle is clear, because it is fruitful.

THEODORE. At first it seems, Aristes, that the principle, because of its generality, has no solidity. But when followed closely, it takes hold of us to such an extent and so promptly by the number of astonishing truths which it discloses to us that we are charmed with it. Learn from this that the most general principles are the most fruitful ones. They appear at first to be mere chimeras. Their generality is the cause of this, for the mind tends to ignore that which does not touch it. Yet hold these principles firmly if you can and follow them; they will teach you a good deal in a short time.

ARISTES. I shall feel sure of this when I meditate a little upon what you have told me, and even now, without any mental effort, I see, it seems to me, in one glance, in your principle the explanation of a number of difficulties which I have always felt regarding the action of God. I see that all those effects which contradict one another, those productions which conflict with and destroy one another, those disorders which disfigure the world,—I see that all this indicates no contradiction in the cause which governs it, no lack of intelligence, no want of power, but an astounding fruitfulness and a perfect uniformity in the laws of nature.

THEODORE. Gently, Aristes, for we shall explain all this more exactly in the sequel.

XII. ARISTES. I understand even that the reason of the predestination of man must be found in your principle. I used to believe that God had chosen from all eternity such and such beings precisely because He so willed without there being any reason for His choice, either on His part or ours, and that subsequently He consulted His wisdom as to the means requisite for sanctifying them and leading them safely to heaven. But I understand now that I was mistaken. God does not make any plans blindly without comparing them with the means of

their realisation. He is as wise in the formation of His decrees as in their execution. There are reasons for the predestination of the elect. These are, namely, that the Church of the future formed in the way which God adopts does Him more honour than any Church formed in any other way. For God can act only for the sake of His glory, only in a way which best indicates the character of His attributes. God has not predestined us, neither us nor even our divine Head, because of our natural deserts, but in virtue of reasons furnished to Him by His inviolable law, the immutable order, the necessary relations of the perfections which He comprises in His substance. He wished to unite His Word with a particular nature and to predestine certain people in His Son, because His wisdom indicated to Him that He ought to deal with them thus for the sake of His own glory. Am I following your great principle rightly, Theodore?

THEODORE. Quite rightly. But are you not afraid of going too far into theology? You are already in the midst of the greatest mysteries.

ARISTES. Let us return, for it is not my business to penetrate into these mysteries.

THEOTIMUS. You do well, Aristes, to return promptly, for St. Augustine, the great teacher of grace, wishes us not to look for the reasons of the choice which God has made amongst men. Predestination is entirely gratuitous, and the reason why God takes a certain person and not another is that He shows pity to whomsoever He pleases.

ARISTES. What, Theodore! Does St. Augustine maintain that God does not consult His wisdom in the formation of His designs, but only in their execution?

THEODORE. No, Aristes. But apparently Theotimus is explaining St. Augustine after the manner of certain people. The learned doctor writing against the heretics of his time is rejecting the wicked reason which they gave for God's choice and for the distribution of His grace. Yet he was always ready to accept any accounts which were in harmony with faith and which did not destroy the free character of God's grace. The argument of the heretics put briefly is this; it is well that you should know it and be in a position to refute it. God wishes all men to be saved, and to arrive at the knowledge of truth. They can, therefore, all be saved through their natural

endowments. But if this is not possible, without the aid of inner grace, said the more moderate amongst them, let us just see to whom God will grant it. God elects some in preference to others. Well, agreed; but at least let His choice or election be reasonable. Now, it is a commonly accepted notion that he who chooses the worse chooses badly. If, therefore, God does not grant His grace to all alike, if He makes a selection, He must needs prefer the best or less wicked to the more wicked, for there can be no doubt that the selection which He makes of some rather than others is a wise and reasonable selection. He is no respector of persons. It follows necessarily that the reason of His choice in the distribution of His grace is to be found in the good use which we can still make of our natural endowments. It is for us to will, to desire our recovery, to believe in the Mediator, to implore His pity—in a word to begin, and God will come to our aid. Through the good use that we make of our free will we shall merit God's gift of grace.

ARISTES. These people argued well.

THEODORE. Perfectly well, but on the basis of false ideas; they did not consult the notion of the infinitely perfect Being. They made God act in the manner in which men act. For, observe, why do you think that God sends us rain?

ARISTES. To render fruitful the land which we cultivate.

THEODORE. Then it would only be necessary to sow a plant in a field in order that it should rain; for since God does not cause rain to fall upon all lands alike, since He makes a choice or selection, He is bound to choose reasonably, and to cause rain to fall upon lands which are under cultivation rather than upon others, rather than upon sands and seas. Find from this comparison the fallacy in the arguments of the enemies of grace. But do not quibble, pray.

ARISTES. I see what you mean, Theodore. Whether the earth be cultivated or left sterile, it does not rain more or less on that account. Usually it rains only in consequence of the general laws of nature, in accordance with which God maintains the universe. In the same way the reason of the distribution of grace is not derived from our natural merits. God only bestows upon us the first gifts of grace, I mean those whereby we are selected, in consequence of certain natural laws.[1] For God does not act as men do, as particular causes

[1] Cf. Dialogue XII, *Traité de la Nature et de la Grâce*, II, *Réponse à la Dissertation de M. Arnauld*, Chs. VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, etc.

and limited intellects. The reason of His choice comes from the wisdom of His laws, and the wisdom of His laws from the relations in which they stand to His attributes, from their simplicity, their fruitfulness, their divinity. The choice which God makes of men in the distribution of His grace is thus reasonable and perfectly worthy of the wisdom of God, though it is based neither upon differences of nature nor upon inequality of merits.

THEODORE. You have accomplished your task, Aristes. In a few words you have upset the firmest basis of Pelagianism. A man who should irrigate the sands or carry into the sea the water which is needed for his field would not be wise. This is nevertheless what God does in consequence of His laws, and in doing so He acts very wisely, divinely. This is sufficient to silence those arrogant heretics who wish to teach God to make a wise and reasonable selection amongst men.

Well, Theotimus, do you still fear that Aristes will fall into the precipice wherewith St. Augustine frightens, and with reason, those who seek in their deserts the cause of their election? Aristes thinks that the distribution of grace is purely gratuitous. We can be at peace as far as he is concerned. Let us rather pity certain people whom we know, who maintain that God chooses His elect out of kindness to them, without wisdom and reason on His part; for it is a horrible impiety to believe that God is not wise in the formation of His designs as well as in their execution. Predestination is gratuitous as far as we are concerned. Grace is not distributed according to our deserts, so St. Augustine maintains, following St. Paul and the whole Church; but it is regulated in accordance with a law, from which God never departs. For God has formed the design which involves the predestination of certain beings rather than that of a number of others, because there is no design wiser than this or worthier of His attributes. That is what your friends cannot understand.

THEOTIMUS. What do you expect, Theodore? One naturally falls into the trap of judging God by oneself. We all of us love independence, and it is a kind of servitude for us to submit to reason, a kind of impotence not to be able to do what it forbids. Thus we are afraid of making God impotent in order to make Him wise, but God is to Himself His own wisdom. The supreme wisdom is eternal and consubstantial with Him. He loves it necessarily; and, though He is obliged to follow it, He yet remains independent. All that God wills is wise and reasonable; not

that God is above reason, not that what He wills is just simply and solely because He wills it, but because He cannot belie Himself, because He cannot will anything which does not conform to law, to the immutable and necessary order of His divine perfections.

THEODORE. Assuredly, Theotimus, it would mean to upset everything to maintain that God is above reason, and that He has no other rule in His designs than His will alone. This false principle carries with it so profound an obscurity, that it confounds the good with the bad, the true with the erroneous, and reduces all things to a chaos wherein the mind can no longer know anything. St. Augustine has furnished irrefutable proofs of the Fall based upon the disorders which we experience in ourselves. Man suffers, therefore he is not innocent. The mind depends upon the body, therefore man is corrupt; he is no longer such as God has made him; God could not have subjected the more to the less noble, because the order of things does not permit it. What consequences these are for those who are not afraid to say that God's will is the sole rule of His actions! They can only reply that God has willed it thus; that it is our self-love which makes us consider the pain we suffer an injustice; that it is our pride which is injured when it finds that the mind is in subjection to the body; that since God has willed these alleged disorders, it is an impiety to appeal to reason against them, since the will of God does not recognise reason as the guide of His action. According to this principle, the universe is perfect, since it is the product of God's will. Monstrosities are productions completed just like the others according to God's designs. It is good to have our eyes at the top of our head, but they would have been placed elsewhere with equal wisdom if God had placed them elsewhere. Let the world be turned upside down, let it be turned into a chaos, it will remain for ever just as admirable, since its whole beauty consists in its conformity to the Divine will, which is not itself obliged to conform to order. But, then, this will is unknown to us. It follows that all the beauty of the universe disappears if we follow this grand principle that God is superior to the reason which enlightens all minds, and His will alone is the sole rule of His actions.

ARISTES. Ah, Theodore, how well all your principles are linked together! I understand in addition, from what you

have just said, that it is in God and in an immutable nature that we see beauty, truth and justice, since we are not afraid to criticise His work, to point out defects therein, and even to conclude that it is corrupt. The immutable order which we see in part must be the law of God Himself, written upon His substance in eternal and divine characters, since we are not afraid to judge His action by the knowledge which we have of this law. We lay it down emphatically that man is not such as God has made him, that his nature is corrupted, that God could not when He created him have subjected his mind to his body. Are we impious or fool-hardy to express opinions in this manner as to what God ought or ought not to do? Not at all. We should, on the contrary, be either impious or blind if we suspended our judgment on these matters. For we do not judge of God on our own authority, but on the supreme authority of the divine law.

THEODORE. That is a reflection, my dear Aristes, worthy of you. Do not forget, then, to study this law, since it is from this sacred code of the immutable order that such important conclusions can be derived.

TENTH DIALOGUE

The magnificence of God in the greatness and infinite number of His different works—The simplicity and fecundity of the ways in which He conserves them and develops them—The providence of God in the first impression of movement which He communicated to matter—This first action, which is not determined by general laws, is regulated by an infinite wisdom.

THEOTIMUS. What do you think, Aristes, of the general principles which Theodore put before us yesterday? Have you always followed them? Has not their generality, sublimity, discouraged or fatigued you? For my part, I confess this to my cost, I wanted to follow them, but they escaped me like phantoms, so that I have given myself a great deal of useless trouble.

ARISTES. When a principle has nothing that can affect the senses, it is very difficult to follow it and grasp it firmly. When what one seizes has no body, what means are there for maintaining a hold over it?

THEOTIMUS. Quite naturally it is looked upon as a phantom, for the mind being distracted, the principle vanishes, and one finds to one's surprise that nothing is left. We seize the principle once again, but once more it escapes us. And though it only escapes us when we close our eyes, as we often do without being aware of the fact, we believe that it is the principle which has vanished. That is why we look upon it as a phantom deluding us.

ARISTES. That is true, Theotimus; it is, I believe, on this account that general principles rather resemble chimeras, and that the majority of people, who are not made for the work of attention, look upon them as chimerical.

THEOTIMUS. There is nevertheless a very great difference between these two things, for general principles please the mind which they enlighten by their clearness, whereas phantoms please the imagination, which indeed is responsible for their being. And, although it seems that it is the mind which forms these prin-

ciples, and generally all truths because they present themselves to it in consequence of its attention, I think that you are well aware that they are given to us, and that they do not derive their reality from the efficacy of our own action, for all immutable truths are but relations subsisting between ideas, the existence of which is necessary and eternal. But the phantoms which the imagination produces, or which are produced in the imagination as a natural result of the general laws of the conjunction of soul and body, exist only for a time.

ARISTES. I believe, Theotimus, that nothing is more solid than truth, and that the more general truths are, the more reality and light they possess. Theodore has convinced me of this. But I am so sensuous and gross that often I find no attraction in them, and I am sometimes tempted to abandon them altogether.

THEOTIMUS. You hear this, Theodore?

THEODORE. You will do nothing of the kind, Aristes; truth is of greater worth than onions and cabbages. It is an excellent manna.

ARISTES. Quite excellent, I admit, but it sometimes appears empty and of little solidity. It is not very much to my taste; and you want us to gather from it afresh day after day. That is not too pleasant.

THEODORE. Well, Aristes, let us pass this day in the manner in which the Jews do their Sabbath. Perhaps you did sufficient work yesterday for two days.

ARISTES. Assuredly, Theodore, I worked a good deal, but I gained nothing.

THEODORE. Nevertheless, I left you quite busy drawing conclusions. At the rate you were going on you ought to have your two measures full of conclusions.

ARISTES. What measures? Two gomers?[1] Give to your principles more body if you wish me to fill these measures; make them more tangible and palpable. They slip through my fingers; the slightest heat dissolves them, and after a good deal of work I find that I have nothing.

THEODORE. You are benefiting, Aristes, without noticing the fact. These principles which pass through the mind and yet escape it always leave some vestige of light.

ARISTES. That is true. I know it quite well. But must I begin anew every day and leave behind my usual food? Could

[1] Gomer or Omer, a Hebrew measure of capacity.—Tr.

you not make the principles of your philosophy more accessible to the senses ?

THEODORE. I am afraid, Aristes, that in doing so they would become less intelligible. Believe me, I always make them as tangible as possible. But I am afraid of corrupting them. It is allowable to corporealise truth, in order to adapt it to our natural weakness, and to sustain the attention of the mind which cannot get a grip of that which has no body. Yet it is necessary that the sensible should lead us to the intelligible, that the flesh should lead us to reason, and that the truth should appear as it really is without disguise. The information furnished by the senses is not solid. Only the intelligible can through its evidence and light supply food for intelligent minds. You know that is so. Try to remember it and follow me.

ARISTES. Of what do you wish to speak ?

I. THEODORE. Of Providence in general, or of the ordinary course of action which God adopts in the government of the world. You have seen, Aristes, and perhaps even forgotten, that the infinitely perfect Being, though self-sufficient, was able to adopt the design of forming this universe ; that He created it for Himself for the sake of His own glory ; that He has put Jesus Christ at the head of His work, at the beginning of His designs and ways, in order that all should be divine ; that He could not undertake the most perfect world possible, but only the most perfect that could be produced in the wisest and most divine ways ; so that any other work produced in any other way could not express more exactly the perfections which God possesses and in the possession of which He glories. Hence the Creator is, so to speak, ready to come out of Himself, out of His eternal sanctuary, ready to take the field by the production of creatures. Let us see something of His magnificence in His work; but let us follow Him closely in the majestic steps of His ordinary action. As to His magnificence in His work, it shines forth from all sides. In whatever direction we may turn our eyes, we see a profusion of wonders. And if we cease to admire them it is because we cease to look upon them with the attention they deserve, for the astronomers who measure the magnitude of the planets, and who are eager to know the number of the stars, are the more struck with admiration the more they come to know about them. At one time the sun appeared to them as great as the Peleponesus,

but to-day the more expert among them think it a million times larger than the earth. The ancients counted only a thousand and twenty-two stars, but to-day no one dares to count them. God indeed has told us that no man can ever number them! The invention of telescopes compels us, however, to recognise that the catalogues which we have of them are very imperfect. They contain only those which can be discovered by the naked eye, that is, of course, the smallest number. I believe even that there are more than one will ever be able to render visible even by the aid of the best telescopes, and meanwhile there is good ground for believing that a very large proportion of these stars yield neither in grandeur nor majesty to the vast body which to us on earth appears the most luminous and most beautiful. How great then God is in the heavens, how sublime in their depths, how magnificent in their brilliance! how wise and powerful in the regulation of their movements!

II. But, Aristes, let us leave the sublime. Our imagination fails us in those immense spaces to which we dare not ascribe limits, which yet we are afraid to leave without boundaries. How great is the number of wonderful works upon the earth which we inhabit,—upon this spot which is imperceptible to them who measure only the celestial bodies! But this earth, which our friends the astronomers think so little of, is still too vast for me; I shut myself up in your park. What flowers and fruit! The other day I was lying in the shade, and it occurred to me to note the variety of herbs and small animals which I found under my eyes. Without moving from my place, I counted more than twenty kinds of insects in a very small space, and at least as many different plants. I took hold of one of the insects, the name of which I do not know, perhaps indeed it had none; for the men who give diverse names, and often too magnificent ones, to everything that comes from their hands believe that they need not name those works of the Creator which they have not learnt to admire. I took hold, I say, of one of these insects, I examined it closely, and I do not hesitate to say of it, what Jesus Christ said of the lilies of the field, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of these. After having admired for some time this little creature, which is so unjustly despised, and indeed so unworthily and cruelly treated by the other animals to whom apparently it serves as food, I

began to read a book which I had with me, and I found therein a very astounding thing, namely, that there is in the world an infinite number of insects at least a million times smaller than the one I had just been examining, fifty thousand times smaller than a grain of sand.[1]

Do you know, Aristes, what a "toise" is? I mean the standard of measurement employed by people who wish to indicate the smallness or, if you wish, the largeness of these living atoms; for though they are small in relation to us, they do not on that account cease to be large as compared with others. The standard I refer to is the diameter of the eye of these small domestic animals which have annoyed men so much that they have been forced to honour them with a name. It is by aid of this standard, but reduced to feet and inches, for, taken as a whole, it is too big, it is, I say, by aid of the parts of this new standard, that these observers of the curiosities of nature measure the insects which are found in liquids, and of which they prove, by means of geometrical principles, that an infinite number can be found which are a thousand times smaller at least than the eye of an ordinary louse. Let not this standard shock you, it is one of the most exact and most common. This little animal has made itself sufficiently well known, and so can be found at all seasons. These philosophers are very glad that the facts they put before us can be verified at any time, and that people are able to appreciate with certainty the multiplicity and delicacy of the wonderful works of the author of the universe.

ARISTES. This rather surprises me; but pray tell me, Theodore, are those animals which are imperceptible to the eye and almost like atoms even under good microscopes the smallest? May there not be many others which will for ever escape the ingenuity of men? Perhaps the smallest which have as yet been seen are to those which never will be seen as the elephant to the gnat. What do you think of that?

THEODORE. We are lost, Aristes, in the realm of the small, just as we are in that of the great. There is no one who can claim to have discovered the smallest animal. At one time this was taken to be the midge, but to-day the little midge has become prodigious in its size. The more our microscopes are perfected, the more convinced do we become that the smallness of matter imposes no limit upon the wisdom of the Creator,

[1] Lettre de M. Leeuwenhoeck à M. Wren.

that out of nothing, so to speak, out of an atom which is not accessible to our senses, He produces works which transcend our imagination, and which are beyond even the vastest intellect. I am going to explain this to you.

III. When one is quite convinced, Aristes, that this variety and this succession of beautiful things which adorn the universe is but a consequence of the general laws of the communication of motion, which can all be reduced to the simple and natural law, that bodies in motion, or when impelled, move always in the direction of least resistance, and that they will always move with the velocity which is reciprocally proportional to their masses, provided the energy remains unaltered; when, I say, one is convinced that all the figures and modifications of matter have no other cause than movement, that all communication of motion takes place according to a law, so natural and simple that it seems as though nature acted only out of a blind impetuosity, one understands clearly that it is not the earth which produces plants, and that it is not possible that the union of the two sexes should produce a work so wonderful as the body of an animal. One can very well believe that the general laws of the communication of motion are sufficient to develop and cause the growth of organic bodies, but one can never persuade oneself that they could *produce* so complicated a machine. We see quite well, that, if we do not wish to have recourse to an extraordinary Providence, we are bound to believe that the germ of a plant contains in miniature the plant which it engenders, and that the animal contains in its organs the creature that will come out of it. We understand even that it is necessary that every seed should contain the whole species which it can produce, that every grain of corn, for example, contains in miniature the ear which it will eventually produce, every grain of which in its turn contains its ear, all the grains of which again can always be just as fruitful as those of the first ear. Assuredly, it is not possible that the bare laws of motion could adjust to one another and in relation to certain ends an almost infinite number of organic parts which constitute what is called an animal or plant. It is much, that these simple and general laws should suffice to cause the silent growth and the appearance in their due time of all these wonderful works of God formed in the first days of the creation of the world. Not that the small animal or the germ of the

plant has between all its parts precisely the same proportion of size and solidity and figure as the animals and plants; but that all the parts which are essential for the mechanism of animals and plants are so wisely arranged in their germs that in the course of time and in consequence of the general laws of motion they are bound to assume the figure and form which we observe in them. Grant this:

IV. And reflect, Aristes, that a fly has as many organic parts as, or perhaps more than, a horse or an ox. A horse has but four feet, a fly has six, and in addition it has wings of a wonderful structure. You know how the head of an ox is formed. Look then one day at the head of a fly through the microscope and compare the one with the other; you will see quite well that I am not imposing upon you. Remember once more that a cow yields but two calves a year, and that a fly yields a swarm containing more than a thousand flies; for the smaller animals are the more prolific they are. And you are aware, perhaps, that at present bees have no longer a king that they honour, but only a queen that they make much of, and that alone produces an entire swarm. Try, then, to imagine the amazing smallness, the wonderful delicacy of all the bees, and of the thousands of organised bodies which the mother bee carries within its ovary.[1] And although your imagination staggers at the thought, do not think that a fly is made out of a grub without being contained therein, nor the grub out of an egg, for that is inconceivable.

ARISTES. Since matter is infinitely divisible, I understand quite well that God could make in the realm of the small all that we see in that of the great. I have heard that a Dutch scientist[2] has discovered a method enabling one to see in the chrysalis of a caterpillar the butterflies which are to come out of it. I have often seen in the middle of winter bulbs containing entire tulips with all the parts which they have in the spring. Thus I am quite willing to grant that all seeds contain a plant and all eggs an animal similar to that out of which they came.

V. THEODORE. You have not got far as yet. It is about six thousand years since the world was made, and bees have been producing swarms. Let us suppose that these swarms

[1] According to M. Swammerdam, one bee produces about four thousand.
[2] Swammerdam, *Histoire des Insectes.*

are each a thousand in number. The first bee must, therefore, have been a thousand times larger than the second, and the second a thousand times larger than the third, and the third a thousand times larger than the fourth, and so on, diminishing regularly down to a six-thousandth, in the progression of a thousand to one. That is clear from our hypothesis, since that which contains is larger than that which is contained. Realise, then, if you can the wonderfully delicate structure which contained, in the first bee, all those of the year 1687.

ARISTES. That is quite easy. One need only find the exact values of the last term of a progression, whose common ratio is a thousandth carried to six thousand terms, and the first of which stands for the value of the natural size of a honey-bee. The bees of this year were in the beginning of the world a thousand times smaller, nay, Theodore, five thousand nine hundred and ninety-seven thousand times smaller. That is their exact size if we grant your assumptions.

THEODORE. I understand you, Aristes. In order to express the relation between the natural size of the bee and the size which the bees of 1687 had in the beginning of the world, granting that it is six thousand years since they were created, it is only necessary to write down a fraction, having unity for its numerator and unity also for denominator, but only accompanied by eighteen thousand ciphers. What a nice fraction! But are you not afraid that a unity broken up and shattered so much will fade away, and that your bee will come to resemble nothing at all?

ARISTES. No, not at all, Theodore. For I know that matter is infinitely divisible, and small and great are purely relative terms. I see without difficulty, though my imagination shrinks therefrom, that since what we call an atom can be divided indefinitely, any part of extension is in a sense infinitely great, and that God can do in the realm of the small all that we see in that of the great in the world which we wonder at. Yes, the smallness of bodies can never arrest the divine power; I can see this clearly, for geometry teaches us that there is no unity in extension, and that matter can be eternally divided.

THEODORE. That is all right, Aristes. You can see, then, that if the world has endured several thousands of centuries, God was able to preform within a single bee all those bees which were to come out of it, and to adjust the simple laws of the communication of movement in such a wise manner to the

design which He had of making them increase insensibly and of producing them each year that their species could never die out. What structures of wonderful delicacy are hidden in so small a portion of space as is filled by the body of a single bee! For without prophesying about the uncertain duration of the world, it is about six thousand years since bees have been putting forth their swarms. How many bees, then, do you think did the first bee which God created, assuming that He only created one, carry within its ovary, in order to be able to supply bees up to the present time?

ARISTES. That can be easily calculated, certain assumptions being made. How many females, do you think, does each mother-bee yield in each swarm? There is only this and the number of years to be determined.

THEODORE. Do not linger over this calculation. It is too easy! But apply, in due proportion, what you have just found in reference to bees to an almost infinite number of other animals. Judge by means of it of the number and the delicacy of the plants which existed in miniature in the first plants, and which every year unfold themselves in order to reveal themselves to mankind.

VI. THEOTIMUS. Let us leave all these speculations, Theodore. God supplies us with an abundance of works at our very doors without our having to go to those which we cannot see. There is not an animal or plant which does not sufficiently indicate by its wonderful construction that the wisdom of the Creator is infinitely beyond our comprehension. And He produces them year by year with such profusion that His magnificence and grandeur ought to impress and astonish the most stupid of men. Without going beyond ourselves, we find in our own bodies a machine made up of a thousand springs, and all so wisely adjusted to their end, so well connected with and subordinated to one another, that this alone is sufficient to humble us and prostrate us before the author of our being. I have not long since read a book about the movements of animals which deserves consideration.[1] The author examines with care the plan of the machine which is necessary for locomotion. He explains in an exact manner the strength of the muscles, and the reasons for their various positions—all according to the principles of geometry and mechanics. But, although he only deals with what is most

[1] Borelli, *De Motu Animalium.*

easily discovered in the animal mechanism, he makes us recognise so much skill and wisdom in Him who made it that he fills the mind of the reader with admiration and surprise.

ARISTES. It is true, Theotimus, that the anatomy of the human body alone, or of the most despised of animals, gives so much light to the mind and strikes it so vividly that one must be senseless not to recognise its author.

VII. THEODORE. You are both right. But as for me, what I find most wonderful is the fact that God forms all these excellent works, or at least makes them grow and develop before our eyes, by following exactly certain general, simple and very fertile laws, which He has prescribed to Himself. I do not admire the trees covered with fruits and flowers so much as their marvellous growth in consequence of natural laws. A gardener takes an old rope, rubs it with a fig, and buries it in a furrow, and some time afterwards I see that all those little seeds which we feel in our teeth when we eat figs have pierced the earth, and have pushed forth on one side roots and on another a nursery of fig-trees. That is what I wonder at. To irrigate the fields in consequence of natural laws and with a little water to cause entire forests to spring forth from the earth; an animal to conjoin itself brutishly and mechanically with another, and thereby to perpetuate its species; a fish to follow its female and to fertilise the eggs which she loses in the water; a field ravaged by hail to be in a short time rejuvenated, covered with plants and the usual wealth; by aid of the wind to transport grains from distant countries and through the rain to spread them over those which have been desolated—all these are an infinity of effects produced by the simple and natural law that all bodies should move in the direction of least resistance, and that assuredly is something one cannot sufficiently admire. Nothing is more beautiful, nothing more magnificent in the universe than this profusion of animals and plants such as we have recognised. But, believe me, nothing is more divine than the way in which God fills the world, than the use which God knows how to make of a law which is so simple that it seems to be good for nothing.

ARISTES. I am of your opinion, Theodore. Let us leave it to the astronomers to measure the magnitude and the motions of the stars for the purpose of predicting eclipses. Let us leave it to anatomists to dissect the bodies of animals and plants so

as to find out the mechanism and the relations of the parts. In a word, let us leave it to the natural philosophers to study the detail of nature, in order to admire all its marvels. Let us deal mainly with the general truths of your metaphysics. We have, it seems to me, sufficiently discovered the magnificence of the Creator in the infinite multiplicity of His marvellous works. Let us follow Him a little in the measures which He adopts in the course of His procedure.

VIII. THEODORE. You will admire much more than you do all the parts of the universe, or rather the infinite wisdom of its author, when you will have considered the general laws of Providence. For when one examines the work of God without any regard to the ways of its construction and maintenance, what a number of defects stare us in the face, and often disturb the minds even of philosophers so much that they look upon this wonderful work either as the necessary effect of a blind nature or as a monstrous mixture of good and bad creations, which owe their being to a good and an evil God respectively. But when one compares it with the ways in which God must govern it, in order to make His action bear the character of His attributes, all these defects which disfigure the creation do not fall to the account of the Creator, for if there are any defects in His work, if there are monstrosities and thousands upon thousands of disorders, nothing is more certain than that there are none in His course of action. You have already seen that this is the case, but I must try to make you understand it better.

IX. Do you still remember what I have demonstrated to you[1] that there is a contradiction in supposing that a created thing can move a bit of straw by its own efficacy?

ARISTES. Yes, Theodore. I remember your demonstration quite well and am convinced of its truth. The Creator of matter alone can be its mover.

THEODORE. The Creator alone, therefore, can effect any change in the material world, since all the possible modifications of matter consist but in the sensible or insensible figures of its parts, and all these figures have no other causes than motion.

ARISTES. I do not quite understand what you are saying now. I suspect a surprise.

THEODORE. I have proved to you,[2] Aristes, that matter and

[1] Dialogue VII.

[2] Dialogues I, 2; III, 11, 12.

extension are one and the same; remember this. It is upon this assumption, or rather upon this truth, that I base my argument, for nothing but extension is necessary for the production of a material world, or at least of a world quite similar to the one we inhabit. If you do not agree with me so far, it will be of no avail to proceed.

ARISTES. I remember quite well that you have proved to me that extension is a being or substance and not a modification of substance, for the reason that we can think of it without thinking of any other thing. For, in truth, it is evident that whatever can be thought of in itself is not a mode of being but a being or substance. In this way alone can substances be distinguished from their modifications. I am convinced of this. But may not matter be a substance other than extension? This idea keeps on recurring to my mind.

THEODORE. The terms are different, but not the things indicated by them, providing that by matter you understand that whereof the world which we inhabit is composed. For assuredly it is composed of extension, and I do not take you to be maintaining that it is composed of two substances. One of them would be useless, and I think that this would be yours, for I do not see how anything solid could be made out of it. How could one, Aristes, make a writing-desk, or chairs, or any furniture out of your matter? Such furniture would be rare and precious indeed. But give me extension, and there is nothing which I could not make out of it by the aid of motion.

ARISTES. That is just the point that I do not understand so well.

X. THEODORE. Nevertheless, it is quite easy, provided we judge of things by the ideas which represent them, and are not misled by the prejudices of the senses. Think, Aristes, of an indefinite extension. If between all the parts of this extension there subsisted the same relation of distance, we should have nothing but a huge mass of matter. But if any motion enters into it, and its parts keep on ceaselessly changing position in relation to one another, an infinity of forms is introduced, I mean an infinity of figures and configurations. By *figure* I understand the form of a body sufficiently large to make itself perceptible, by *configuration* the figure of the insensible particles of which large bodies are made up.

ARISTES. Yes, we get thus all sorts of figures and configurations. Yet still we do not perhaps get in this way all the different bodies which we see. The bodies you make out of your extension alone differ only accidentally; but most of the bodies that we see differ perhaps essentially. Earth is not water, a stone is not bread. But it seems to me that out of your extension alone you could only make bodies of the same kind.

THEODORE. The prejudices of the senses confuse you once more, Aristes. A stone is not bread, that is true. But pray tell me, is flour corn? Is bread flour? Our blood, flesh, bones, are they bread or grass? Are these bodies of the same or different species?

ARISTES. Why do you ask me this? Who does not see that bread, flesh, bones, are essentially different bodies?

THEODORE. It is out of corn that one makes flour, out of flour bread, and out of bread flesh and bones. Throughout it is the same matter. If, despite all this, you think that all these bodies differ in kind, why do you not think that out of the same extension bodies essentially different could be produced?

ARISTES. Because your figures and configurations are accidental to matter and do not change its nature.

THEODORE. It is true, matter remains ever the same whatever figure be given to it; but it may be said that a round body is different in kind from a square one.

ARISTES. What! If I take some wax and change its figure, will it not remain the same wax?

THEODORE. It will be the same wax, the same matter; but one might say it will not be the same body, for assuredly what is round is not square. Let us have done with equivocations. For a round body it is essential that all the parts of its surface should be equally distant from the part constituting its centre, but it is not essential that its inner or insensible particles should have any given configuration; in the same way it is essential for the wax that the small particles of which it is composed should have a certain configuration, but it is not changed whatever figure one gives to its mass. Finally, it is essential for matter to be extended, but it is not essential for it either to have any particular figure in its mass, or any particular configuration in the insensible particles of which it is composed. Observe, then, what happens to the corn when it passes through the mill? What happens to the flour when it has been ground and baked? It is clear that a change has taken place in the positions

and configurations of the insensible particles, as well as in the figure of the mass as a whole; and I cannot see how there could come about a change which was more essential.

XI. ARISTES. It is maintained, Theodore, that over and above this change there supervenes a substantial form.

THEODORE. I am well aware that that is what is maintained. But I cannot see anything that is more accidental to matter than this chimera! What change can it bring about in the corn which one grinds?

ARISTES. Merely the change which causes it to become flour.

THEODORE. What! Cannot corn which has been well ground be reduced to flour without that?

ARISTES. It may be perhaps that flour and corn do not differ essentially. They are perhaps two bodies of the same kind.

THEODORE. And flour and dough, are they also the same kind? Observe then! Dough is nothing but flour and water well mixed together. Do you think that one could not make dough by thorough kneading without the aid of a substantial form?

ARISTES. Yes; but without such form bread cannot be made.

THEODORE. A substantial form, then, it is which transforms the dough into bread. Let us see. When is it that the form is added to the dough?

ARISTES. When the bread is baked, well baked.

THEODORE. That is so; for doughy bread is not, strictly speaking, bread. The latter has as yet no other substantial form than that of corn or of flour or dough; for these three bodies are of the same kind or species. But if the substantial form failed to supervene, would well-baked dough not be bread? Now, it does not receive this form until the dough is baked. Let us try then to eliminate it. After all it is very difficult to seize it on account of the potency of its matter! One does not know how to set about it.

ARISTES. I see quite well, Theodore, that you want to amuse yourself; but let it not be at my expense, for I assure you I have always looked upon these assumed forms as figments of the human imagination. Tell me, rather, how it is that so many people have come to believe in this doctrine.

THEODORE. Because the senses lead us to such a view quite naturally. As we experience essentially different sensations on the presence of sensible objects, we are induced to believe that

these objects differ in essence. And this is true in a sense; for the configuration of the invisible particles of wax are essentially different from those of water. But as we do not see these small particles, their configuration, their difference from one another, we conclude that the masses which they constitute are substances of different kinds. Now, experience teaches us that in all bodies there is a common substratum, since they can be produced out of one another. We conclude, therefore, that there is something which is responsible for their specific difference; and it is this characteristic which we attribute to the substantial form.

XII. ARISTES. I see, Theodore, quite well that the great principle which you proved to me long ago in our previous talks [1] is indeed necessary, namely, that we must not judge of the nature of bodies by the sensations which they excite in us, but only by the idea which represents them, and in accordance with which they have been formed. Our senses are false witnesses, to which we must not listen except as compelled by facts. They give us but confused information as to the relation subsisting between the bodies of our environment and our own, sufficient indeed for the preservation of life, but having nothing accurate in their testimony. Let us always follow this principle.

THEODORE. Let us follow it, Aristes, and comprehend that all the modifications of extension are and can only be modifications of figures, configurations, movements, whether sensible or not—in a word, nothing but relations of distance. An indefinite extension without movement, without change in the relation of distance between its parts, would be nothing but a huge mass of unformed matter. Let motion be introduced into this mass, and move its particles in an infinite number of ways, and we have an infinite number of different bodies. For observe, it is impossible that all the parts of this extension should change their relations of distance in an equal manner with regard to all the other parts; it is on this account that we can understand how the parts of extension move, and that we can discover therein an infinity of different figures or bodies. Since your head, for example persists as it does in the same relation of distance to your neck and the other parts of your body, all these make up but one body. But as the particles of the air surrounding you move in different ways upon your face and upon the remainder of your

[1] Dialogues III, IV, V.

organism, this air is not one with your body. Consider each particle of the fibres in your body and remember that the relation of distance which subsists between any determinate particle and any given neighbouring particle does not change at all or but little, and that the relation of distance subsisting between it and a number of certain of its other neighbouring particles keeps on changing incessantly, and you will thus construct an infinity of small channels in which the humours circulate. Any given particle of the fibres of your hand does not move away from another neighbouring particle of the same fibres, but it ceaselessly changes its position in relation to the animal spirits, the blood, the humours, and the infinite number of small bodies which come into touch with it in passing, and which continually escape through the pores which the intertwining of our fibres leaves in the flesh. It is this which makes any given part precisely what it is. Consider then all the particles of which such fibre is composed. Compare them with one another and with the fluid humours of your body, and you will see without any difficulty what I wish to make you comprehend.

ARISTES. I follow you, Theodore. Assuredly nothing is clearer than that all the possible modifications of extension are only relations of distance, and that it is only through the variety of motion and rest of the particles of matter that this variety of different figures and bodies is brought about which we admire in the world. When one judges of objects by the sensations which one has of them, one finds oneself strangely embarrassed at every moment, for one often has essentially different sensations of the same object and similar sensations of quite different objects. The testimony of the senses is always obscure and confused. It is necessary to judge of all things by the ideas which represent their nature. If I consult my senses, snow, hail, rain, vapour are bodies differing in kind. But by consulting the clear and luminous idea of extension I see quite well, it seems to me, that a little motion can reduce ice to water, and even to vapour, without changing the configurations of the small particles of which these bodies are composed. I see even that by changing their configuration there is nothing that could not be made out of them, for since bodies differ essentially only in the size, configuration, motion, and rest, of the insensible particles of which their masses are composed, it is evident that in order to make gold, for example, out of lead, or whatever else you please, it is necessary only to divide or rather to join the small particles of the

lead and to give them the size and configuration essential to the small particles of gold, or which cause a given matter to be gold. This can be seen without difficulty. Yet I believe, nevertheless, that those who look for the philosopher's stone will sooner reduce their gold to ashes or smoke than make any new gold.

THEODORE. That is true, Aristes, for who knows the size and configuration of the small particles of this choice metal? And assume this to be known, who can tell the configuration of the small parts of lead or quicksilver? But let us even assume that instead of working blindly and at haphazard, they know that these particles of quicksilver, combined in a certain way, will produce exactly one of those small particles of which gold is made up: I defy them to combine these particles so accurately as to produce even one particle resembling those of gold. Assuredly the subtle matter which finds its way everywhere will prevent them from combining them accurately. They may perhaps fix the mercury, but so badly, so imperfectly, that it will not feel the fire without evaporating into vapour. Let them even succeed in fixing it in such a way as to render experimentation possible, what will it end in? A new metal, more beautiful than gold I grant, but perhaps looked down upon. The particles of the quicksilver will be combined in the proportion of 4 to 4, 5 to 5, 6 to 6, but unfortunately it was necessary that they should be in the proportion of 3 to 3. They will be combined in one way instead of in another. A vacuum will be left between them which will cause its weight to decrease, and which will give it a colour which will be disliked. Bodies, Aristes, can easily be transformed into others when it is not necessary that the configuration of their insensible particles should be changed. Vapours are easily transformed into rain, because for this purpose it is sufficient that they should diminish their motion, and that several of them should be joined together imperfectly. And for a similar reason only a cold wind is necessary to harden rain into hail. Yet in order to change water into any of those things which are needful for plants, it is necessary to have in addition to motion, without which nothing can be done, moulds made expressly for fixing in a certain way this fluid matter.

THEOTIMUS. Well now, Theodore, why do you linger over this point? You wanted to speak of Providence, and you embark upon questions of physics.

THEODORE. I thank you, Theotimus. Perhaps I was wandering from the point. Nevertheless, it seems to me that all that

we have just been saying is not far removed from our subject. It was necessary that Aristes should understand that it is through motion that bodies change as regards figure in their mass, and as regards configuration in their insensible particles. It was necessary, so to speak, to make him feel this truth, and I think that what we have just said may serve for this purpose. Let us come, then, to Providence.

XIII. It is assuredly through the sun that God animates the world which we inhabit. It is through the sun that He raises vapours. It is through the movement of vapours that He produces winds. It is through the crossing of the winds that He gathers together the vapours and resolves them again into rain, and it is through rain that He renders our earth fruitful. Whether this is so, or whether it is not exactly as I have told you, is, Artistes, a question of no importance. You believe, for example, that the rain causes the grass to grow, for if it does not rain everything is parched. You believe that a certain herb has the power of purging, another of nourishing, another still of poisoning ; that fire softens wax, and hardens clay, that it burns wood and reduces a part to ashes, and finally into glass. In a word, you do not doubt that all these bodies have certain qualities or virtues, and that the ordinary providence of God consists in the application of these virtues, by means of which He produces the variety which we admire in His work. Now, these virtues, just as the application of them, consist only in the efficacy of movement, since it is through movement alone that everything is effected ; for it is evident that fire burns only through the movement of its particles, that it has the power of hardening clay only because those particles which it diffuses in all directions meeting the water which is in the earth drive it away through the movement which they communicate to it, and similarly with regard to the other effects. Fire, then, has force or virtue only through the movement of its particles, and the application of this force to a given object comes only from the movement which has brought the object near the fire. In the same way. . . .

ARISTES. What you are saying with regard to fire I extend to all natural causes and effects.

XIV. THEODORE. You see, then, that ordinary Providence resolves itself mainly into two things: into laws of the com-

munication of movement, since everything in bodies is effected by means of movement, and into the wise combination which God has contrived in the order of His productions at the time of their creation, that His work should be preserved by the natural laws which He has resolved to follow.

With regard to the natural laws of movement, God has chosen the simplest ones. He has willed and wills now that every body in motion should move or tend to move in a straight line, that when it encounters other bodies it should be diverted from the straight line as little as possible, that every body should be carried in the direction in which it is impelled, and that if it is impelled at the same time by movements of contrary direction, the stronger movement shall have the victory over the weaker one, but that if these two movements are not contrary, it should move in a line which is the diagonal of a parallelogram, the sides of which stand to one another in the same proportion as these movements. In a word, God has chosen the simplest law on the basis of the unique principle that the stronger shall conquer the weaker; and, subject to this condition, that there shall always be in the world the same quantity of motion. I add the condition because experience teaches us that the motion which animates matter is not dissipated in time through the clashing of bodies coming from different directions, and besides that, God being immutable in His nature, the more uniformity one ascribes to His actions, the more does one make His procedure bear the character of His attributes.

It is not necessary, Aristes, to enter more fully into the details of those natural laws which God follows in the ordinary course of His providence. Let them be whatever you please, it matters little. You know quite certainly that God alone sets bodies in motion, that He accomplishes everything in them by means of motion, that He only communicates motion from one body to another according to certain laws, whatever those laws may be, and that the application of such laws comes from the encounter of bodies. You know that collision of bodies is in consequence of their impenetrability, the occasional or natural cause which determines the efficacy of the general laws. You know that God acts always in a simple and uniform way, that a body in motion goes straight, and that impenetrability compels the moving body to change, but that nevertheless it changes as little as possible, whether because it always follows the same laws or

because the laws which it follows are the simplest of any. This is sufficient so far as the general laws of the communication of movement are concerned. Let us come now to the formation of the universe, and to the wise combination which God has effected between all the parts at the time of the creation for all generations, and by reference to these general laws, for it is this which is so marvellous in the divine Providence. Follow me, please.

XV. I am thinking, Aristes, of a mass of matter without any movement. So far it is a mere block. I wish to make a statue out of it. A little motion will soon produce it, for let the superfluous matter be removed which, when at rest, formed one body with it, and our task is done. I wish this statue to have not merely the figure of a man, but also the organs and all the parts which we do not see. A little motion will form them, for let the matter around that piece of matter out of which I wish, for example, to make the heart move, the other parts remaining at rest, and it will cease to be one body with the heart. Thus, then, the heart is formed. In the same way I can obtain, in idea, all the other organs, such as I conceive them to be. This is evident. Finally, I not only wish my statue to have the organs of the human body, but I also wish that the mass of which it is made should be transformed into flesh and bones, animal spirits, and blood, brain, etc. Once more a little movement will satisfy my demand; for, granting that flesh consists of fibres of a certain configuration intertwined in a certain way, if the matter which fills the spaces between the fibres were to begin moving or were to have no longer the same relation of distance as that of which the fibres are composed, we should obtain flesh; and in the same way, with a little motion, the blood, the animal spirits, the bloodvessels, and all the rest of the human body can be produced. But what is infinitely beyond the capacity of the human mind is to know which parts are to be moved, which are to be taken away, and which left. Let us suppose now that I want to take a very small portion of matter out of the mechanism thus resembling ours and to give it to a certain figure, organs, and any configuration of parts I please, all this can be effected by means of movement, and cannot be executed except by means of movement. For it is evident that a part of matter which is one with another can only be detached by means of movement. Thus I conceive, without

difficulty, that in a human body God can make another one, of the same kind a thousand or ten thousand times smaller, and in this one yet another, and so on in the same proportion of a thousand or ten thousand to one, and all this at once by communicating an infinity of different movements of which He alone is cognisant to the infinitesimal particles of a certain mass of matter.

ARISTES. What you are saying then with regard to the human body can be easily applied to the organic bodies of all animals and plants.

XVI. THEODORE. Very well, then, Aristes. Conceive, however, an indefinite mass of matter as large as the universe out of which God wills to make a beautiful world, but one which will endure and whose beauties will be preserved and perpetuated after their kind. How will He set about it? Will He just move the parts of matter in haphazard fashion, and then gradually construct the world out of them, by following certain laws, or will He construct it all at once? Be careful. The infinitely perfect Being knows all the consequences of all the movements which He can communicate to matter, whatever you may suppose the laws of the communication of movement to be.

ARISTES. It seems to me clear that God will not move matter to no purpose; and, since the first impression which He communicates to the parts is sufficient to produce all sorts of results, assuredly He would not think of forming them little by little by means of a number of useless movements.

THEOTIMUS. But what will become of the general laws of the communication of movement, if God does not make use of them?

ARISTES. That rather embarrasses me.

THEODORE. What is your difficulty? These laws as yet lead to nothing, or rather indeed have no being; for it is the impact of bodies which is the occasional cause of the laws of the communication of movements. Now, without an occasional cause there can be no general law. Hence before God had set matter in motion, before bodies could impel one another, God did not have to, and was not able to, follow the general laws of the communication of movements. Moreover, God only follows general laws in order to render His action uniform, and to make it bear the character of His immutability. Thus, the first step of this procedure, the first movements, cannot and ought not

to be determined by these laws. Finally, an infinity of general laws would be necessary (which means that they would hardly be general) in order that He should be able by following them to form the organic bodies of animals and plants. Thus, since the first impression which God gave to matter ought not, and could not, have been regulated in accordance with general laws, it had to be regulated solely by reference to the beauty of the work which God willed to form and which He was to preserve in the course of time in consequence of general laws. Now, this first impression of motion wisely distributed was sufficient for the production by means of one act of animals and plants which are the most excellent works which God has made out of matter, and all the rest of the universe. This is evident, since bodies differ from one another only by the figure of their masses and by the configuration of their particles, and since a little motion can bring all this about, as you have just now granted. You were, therefore, right, Aristes, in saying that God made out of each mass of matter whatever He willed to make out of it in one act. For though God made the parts of the universe one after another as we seem to be taught in Scripture, it does not follow that He took any time, and followed certain general laws, in order to bring them gradually to perfection. *Dixit et facta sunt.* The first impression of movement was sufficient to produce them in an instant.

XVII. THEOTIMUS. This being so, I see that it is waste of time to wish to explain the history with which Scripture furnishes us of the creation by means of Cartesian principles or by any other principles resembling them.

THEODORE. Certainly one is mistaken if one claims to prove that God created the world by following certain general laws of the communication of movement; but one does not waste one's time if one seeks to ascertain what must happen to matter in consequence of the laws of motion. And for this reason. Though God made each part of the universe in one act, He had yet to pay attention to the laws of nature which He willed constantly to follow in order to make His action bear the character of His attributes. For assuredly His work could not have been preserved in its beauty if He had not adapted it to the laws of motion. A square sun could not have endured so long; a sun without light would soon have become quite brilliant. You have read M. Descartes' *Physics*, Theotimus, and

you, Aristes, will read it some day, for it is well worth while. It is, therefore, not necessary for me to explain this more fully. One ought, however, to examine what this first impression of motion must have been by the aid of which God formed the whole universe in one act for a certain number of centuries. For this is the point of view, so to speak, from which I wish to make you see and admire the infinite wisdom of Providence in the arrangement of matter.

But I am afraid lest your imagination, perhaps already tired, on account of the too abstract things we have just spoken about, will not leave you sufficient power of attention to contemplate so vast a subject; for, Aristes, how great is the wisdom which the first step of God's procedure, the first impression of movement, involves! What relations, what combinations of relations! Certainly, God knew clearly before this first impression all the consequences and all the combination of consequences, not merely all the physical combinations, but all the combinations of the physical with the moral, and all the combinations of the natural with the supernatural. He compared with one another all these consequences with all the consequences of all possible combinations on all sorts of suppositions. He made all these comparisons, I say, in His aim to produce the most excellent work, in the simplest, wisest, most divine ways. He neglected nothing that could make His action bear the character of His attributes; and it was this which without hesitation determined Him to take the first step. Try to see, Aristes, whither this first step led. Observe how a grain of matter driven at first to the right instead of to the left, driven with a degree of force more or less great, was able to change everything in the physical, the moral, yea, even the supernatural spheres! Think, then, of the infinite wisdom of Him who compared and regulated all things so well, that since the first step which He took He orders everything for its end, and goes along majestically, immutably, even divinely, without ever repenting, up to the time when He takes possession of the spiritual temple which He constructed through Jesus Christ, and to which He directs all the steps of His procedure.

ARISTES. Truly, Theodore, you are right in concluding our discussion, for we should soon be lost in so vast a subject.

THEODORE. Think of it, Aristes, because to-morrow we shall have to deal with it.

ARISTES. If we embark upon this ocean, we shall perish.

THEODORE. No, we shall not perish, provided we do not desert the vessel which is to carry us. Let us remain in the Church, always submitting to its authority; if we knock lightly against the rocks, we shall not suffer shipwreck. Man is made to adore God in the wisdom of His action. Let us try to lose ourselves happily in its depths. The human mind is never better occupied than when in enforced silence it adores the divine perfections. But this silence of the soul can come to us only after contemplating what is beyond us. Courage then, Aristes! Contemplate, admire the general providence of the Creator. I have placed you at a point of view from which you ought to discover an incomprehensible wisdom.

ELEVENTH DIALOGUE

The same subject continued—General Providence in the arrangement of bodies and the infinitely infinite combinations of the physical with the moral, of the natural with the supernatural.

THEODORE. Have you, Aristes, made any attempt to compare the first impression of movement which God communicated to matter, the first of His proceedings in the universe, with the general laws of His ordinary providence, and with the various works which were to be preserved and developed through the efficacy of those laws? For it is from this first impression of movement that we must consider God's action; that is, from the point of view of general Providence; for God never repents, never belies His own nature. Have you looked, then, from this point of view upon the beautiful order of created beings and upon the simple and uniform action of the Creator?

ARISTES. Yes, Theodore, but my view is too short. I have discovered a good deal of land, but withal so confusedly that I do not know what to say to you. You have raised me to heights too high for me. One makes discoveries from a distance, but one does not know what one sees. You have lifted me, so to speak, above the clouds, and I am dizzy when I look down.

THEODORE. Ah well, Aristes, let us come down a little.

THEOTIMUS. But too low down we shall see nothing.

ARISTES. I beg of you, Theodore, a little more detail.

THEODORE. Let us descend, Theotimus, since Aristes desires it. But let none of us three forget our point of view; for it will be necessary to ascend as soon as our imagination has been a little reassured and strengthened by some details nearer to the senses and more within our reach.

I. Recall to mind, Aristes, the bees we spoke about yesterday. This little animal is a wonderful piece of work. How many different organs, what order, what connections, what relations

between all the parts! Do not imagine that it has less parts than the elephant. Apparently it has more. Comprehend, then, if you can, the number and the marvellous interplay of all the contrivances of this little mechanism. It is the feeble action of light which frees these contrivances; it is the mere pressure of objects which determines and regulates all their movements. Judge, then, from the construction of these small animals formed with such accuracy, finished with such diligence, not of their wisdom and foresight, for they have none, but of the wisdom and foresight of Him who has gathered together so many contrivances and has arranged them with such wisdom in relation to so many diverse objects and so many different ends. Assuredly, Aristes, you would be wiser than any philosopher that ever lived if you knew exactly the reasons of the construction of the parts of this little animal.

ARISTES. I believe it, Theodore. That is already more than we can grasp. But if such great skill and such profound intelligence are needed for the formation of a simple fly, how marvellous is then the production of an infinite number of them contained within one another and consequently decreasing constantly in size in geometrical progression whose common ratio is a thousandth, since one of them produces a thousand, and that which contains is greater than that which is contained? This staggers the imagination, but let the intellect recognise the wisdom of the author of so many wonderful things!

THEODORE. Why, Aristes? If the small bees are of the same organic structure as the large ones, whoever conceives a large one can conceive an infinite number of them contained in one another. It is, then, only the multiplicity and the small size of these closely similar animals which ought to increase your admiration for the wisdom of the Creator. But your imagination is struck with wonder when it sees on a small scale what it has been accustomed to see only on a large scale.

ARISTES. I thought, Theodore, that I could not have too much admiration.

THEODORE. Yes, but one should admire for good reasons. Do not fear; if admiration pleases you, you will find enough scope for it in the multiplicity and smallness of these bees contained in one another.

ARISTES. How so then?

THEODORE. Because they are not all alike.

ARISTES. I thought so myself; for what evidence is there to show that the grubs of these flies and the eggs of these grubs have as many organs as the flies themselves, as you assert they have?

II. THEODORE. But you are wrong, Aristes, for, quite on the contrary, the grubs have all the organic parts which flies have, yet they have in addition those which are essential to grubs, that is to say, those which are absolutely necessary to render them able to seek, devour, and prepare the nourishing juice of the fly which they carry with them and which they preserve through the instrumentality of the organs and under the form of a grub.

ARISTES. Indeed! According to this way of looking at the matter grubs are more wonderful than flies; they have more organic parts.

THEODORE. Yes, Aristes, and the eggs of the grubs are more wonderful than the grubs themselves, and so on all along the line. So that the flies of this year had more organs a thousand years ago than they have at present. There is a strange paradox for you! But observe, it is easily seen that the laws of the communication of motion are too simple for the construction of organic bodies.

ARISTES. That is true, as it appears to me. It is a great deal if those laws are sufficient to explain their growth. There are people who maintain that insects come from putrefied objects. But if a fly has as many organic parts as an ox, I should prefer saying that this big animal can be made out of clay to maintaining that flies are generated out of rotten flesh.

THEODORE. You are right. But since the laws of movement are not enough to account for the construction of complex bodies, possessing an infinite number of organic parts, it follows necessarily that flies are contained in the grubs out of which they spring. Do not, however, Aristes, imagine that the bee, when as yet in the grub from which it is to come forth, has the same proportions of size, solidity and configuration between its parts as it has when it has come forth, for it has often been noted that a chick's head, for example, when within the egg and when it appears under the form of a grub is much larger than the rest of the body, and that the bones acquire consistence later than the other parts. I maintain merely that all the organic parts of bees are formed in their grub stage, and are so well adapted to the

laws of motion that through their own construction and the efficacy of these laws they can grow, without God intervening again, so to speak, by an extraordinary providence; for it is in this that the incomprehensible wisdom of the divine providence consists. It is this alone which can justify the frequent generation of monstrosities, for God may not perform a miracle in order to prevent their coming to be. At the time of the Creation He constructed animals and plants for all future generations; He laid down the laws of motion which were necessary to make them grow. Now He rests, for all He has to do is to follow these laws.

ARISTES. What wisdom there is in the general providence of the Creator!

THEODORE. Would you like us to ascend a little to a point of view whence we can make a survey of the marvels of Providence?

ARISTES. I am there already, it seems to me, Theodore. I admire and adore with all the respect of which I am capable the infinite wisdom of the Creator in the variety and incomprehensible accuracy of the different motions which He has once for all communicated to this small portion of matter, within which He has formed in one stroke bees for all generations—nay, why do I say bees? an infinity of grubs which may be looked upon as animals of a different species, and has supplied them within so small a portion of space with non-sensuous food in thousands of ways which are altogether beyond us; all this by reference to the laws of motion, laws so simple and so natural that, although God does everything in the ordinary course of His providence by their means, it seems as though He never touches anything, never intervenes anywhere—in a word, that He is at rest.

THEODORE. You find then, Aristes, that this procedure is divine, and more excellent than that of a God who were to act at all moments by means of particular volitions, instead of following such general laws; or who, in order to free Himself from the care of governing His work, were to give souls to all flies, or rather intelligences sufficiently enlightened to form their bodies, or at least to guide them according to their needs and to regulate all their work?

ARISTES. What a comparison!

III. THEODORE. Courage then, Aristes. Cast your glance further still. At the moment when God gave the first impression

of movement to the parts of this small portion of matter out of which He made bees, or any other insect you please, for all generations to come, do you think He foresaw that a certain one of these animals which was to be born in a certain year was on a certain day, a certain hour and under certain circumstances, to direct its eyes to someone with the object of a vicious passion, or imprudently to put itself in the nostrils of a horse and cause this horse to make a movement fatal to the best Prince of the world who will thereby be thrown and killed—a tragic death, and involving an infinity of sad consequences ; or, in order not to combine the physical with the moral, for this involves difficulties the solution of which depends upon certain principles which I have not yet explained, do you think that God foresaw that this insect was through a particular movement to produce something monstrous and irregular in the purely material world ?

ARISTES. Who can doubt that God foresaw all the consequences of this first impression of motion, which in an instant gave rise to a whole species of a particular insect ? He even foresaw in a general way all the consequences of the infinite and quite different movements which He could have communicated to this same portion of matter. He foresaw in addition all the consequences of all the combinations of this portion of matter with all the others and their different movements on the assumption of every possible kind of general laws.

THEODORE. Admire, then, Aristes, adore the depth of the wisdom of God who has thus regulated this first impression of movement given to such a small portion of matter, after an infinite number of comparisons of relations, all laid down by an eternal act of His intelligence. From this portion of matter pass to another and from it to a third, traverse the whole universe, and in one comprehensive glance judge of the wisdom infinitely infinite which has regulated the first impression of movement through which the whole universe was formed in all its parts and for all time ; formed, too, in such a manner that it is assuredly the most beautiful work that could be produced by the most general and the simplest means ; formed in such a manner, rather, that the work and the means should express the perfections which God possesses, and in the possession of which He is glorified better than in that of any other work produced in any other way.

ARISTES. What an abyss ! what immeasurable depths ! What a number of relations and combinations of relations He

had to consider in the first impression of matter in order to create the universe, and to adapt it to the general laws of motion which God follows in the ordinary course of His providence! You have brought me veritably to a point from which one can discern the infinite wisdom of the Creator.

THEODORE. Do you know, Aristes, that you see nothing as yet?

ARISTES. How nothing?

IV. THEODORE. Much, no doubt, Aristes; but this is as nothing when compared with the rest. You have glanced over the infinitely infinite combinations of the movements of matter. But combine the physical with the moral, the movements of the body with the volitions of angels and of men. Combine in addition the natural with the supernatural, and bring all this in relation with Jesus Christ and His Church, for since the latter is the principal of God's designs, it is not likely that in the first impression which God communicated to matter He should have neglected to regulate His action in accordance with the relation which such movements would have with His great and main work. Realise, then, with what wisdom it was necessary to regulate the first movements of matter, if it be true that the order of nature is subordinate to that of grace, if it be true that death overtakes us now in consequence of natural laws, and that there is nothing miraculous in a man finding himself crushed when a horse falls upon him, for you know it is upon the happy or unhappy moment of death that our eternity depends.

ARISTES. Gently, Theodore. It is God who regulates this moment. Our death depends upon Him. God alone can bestow upon us the gift of preservation.

V. THEODORE. Who doubts it? Our death depends upon God in several ways. It depends upon God because it depends upon us; for it is in our power to leave a house which threatens ruin, and it is God who has given us the power. It depends upon God because it depends upon His angels, for God has given to the angels power and has entrusted them with the commission of governing the world, or the external side, so to speak, of His Church. Our happy death depends upon God because it depends upon Jesus Christ, for God has given us in Jesus Christ a chief who watches over us, and who will not allow death to overtake us unhappily if we beseech Him in a fitting manner for the gift of continuance. But do you not think that our death also

depends on God in this sense that He has regulated and produced that first impression of movement, one of the results of which is that a certain house shall collapse at a certain time and under certain circumstances? Everything depends upon God, because it is He who has established all causes, free as well as necessary, and because His foresight is so great that He makes use of the former as happily as of the latter, for God has not communicated His power to minds at haphazard; He did so only after having foreseen all the consequences of their movements as well as those of matter. Moreover, everything depends upon God, because all causes can act only through the efficacy of the divine power. Finally, everything depends upon God because He can interrupt by means of miracles the ordinary course of His providence, and because He never fails to do so when the immutable order of His perfections requires it, I mean when what He owes to His immutability is of less importance than what He owes to His other attributes. But we shall explain all this with greater precision in the sequel. Understand then, Aristes, that our safety is already assured in the interconnection of causes, free as well as necessary, and that all the effects of general Providence are so linked together that the smallest movement of matter may in consequence of general laws coincide with an infinity of considerable events, and that each event depends upon an infinity of subordinate causes. Admire, then, once again the profundity of God's wisdom, who before taking the first step certainly compared the first movements of matter not only with all the natural or necessary consequences, but for still stronger reasons with all the moral and supernatural consequences, on all possible assumptions.

ARISTES. Assuredly, Theodore, from this point of view I discern a wisdom which has no limits. I understand clearly and distinctly that general Providence bears the character of an infinite intelligence, and that it is incomprehensible quite in another way than those who never examine it imagine. A Providence based on an absolute will is less worthy of the infinitely perfect Being; it bears in a lesser degree the character of the divine attributes than that which is regulated by the inexhaustible treasures of wisdom and foresight.

VI. THEODORE. That is what I wanted you to see. Let us come down now to some details, in order to refresh your mind,

and in order to render accessible to your senses a portion of the things which you have just conceived. Have you never amused yourself by feeding in a box some caterpillar or other small insect which is commonly believed to undergo a transformation into a butterfly or fly?

ARISTES. Oh, Theodore! all at once you descend from the great to the small. You keep on coming back to insects.

THEODORE. I do so because I am very glad that we should be admiring what everybody despises.

ARISTES. When I was a child I remember finding silkworms. I took a delight in watching them making their cocoons and burying themselves alive in them, only to revive after a while.

THEOTIMUS. And I, Theodore, have at present in a box full of sand an insect which amuses me, and the history of which I know to some extent. Its Latin name is *formica leo* (ant-lion). It transforms itself into one of those kinds of flies which have long bellies, and which are called, I think, demoiselles.

THEODORE. I know what you are referring to, Theotimus, but you are mistaken in believing that it transforms itself into a demoiselle.

THEOTIMUS. I have seen it, Theodore; this fact is established.

THEODORE. And the other day, Theotimus, I saw a mole being transformed into a blackbird. In what way do you think does one animal become transformed into another? This is as difficult as the formation of insects out of a little putrid flesh.

THEOTIMUS. I understand you, Theodore; the *formica leo* does not transform itself, but merely strips itself of its garb and arms; it casts its horns with the aid of which it makes holes and seizes the ants which fall therein. In fact, I have noticed these horns in the burrow, which the insects make for themselves in the sand, and from which they come out no longer in the character of a *formica leo*, but in that of a demoiselle, or in a form more magnificent.

THEODORE. Quite so. The *formica leo* and the demoiselle are not, properly speaking, two animals differing in kind: the first contains the second, or all the organic parts of which it is made up; but observe, that it possesses in addition what it needs for seizing its prey, obtaining food for itself, and preparing for the other a fitting nourishment. Let us now try

to picture to ourselves the mechanism which is necessary for the movements accomplished by this little animal. It moves backwards in a spiral line, burying itself all the while in the sand, so that, throwing back the sand which it takes up with its horns at every one of its movements, it makes a conical burrow at the bottom of which it hides itself, its horns open and are ready to seize ants and other animals which cannot keep their hold when on the brink of the burrow. When the prey escapes it and makes sufficient effort to cause it to apprehend its loss, it overwhelms it and crushes it by throwing sand upon it, and through this means makes the sides of the burrow more steep. Then it seizes the prey, draws it under the sand, sucks its blood; and, taking it between its horns, throws it away as far as possible from the burrow. Finally, it constructs for itself, in the finest and most mobile sand, a perfectly round tomb, decorates it very nicely in preparation for its death, or rather for resting at ease, and finally after a few weeks it is seen coming out in all its new glory and in the shape of a demoiselle, after having thrown off the several coverings and skins of the *formica leo*. Now, how many organic parts are necessary for these movements? How many vessels are needed to carry the blood upon which the *formica leo* and its demoiselle feed? It is clear then that this animal, having stripped itself of all these parts in its tomb, has a much smaller number of organs when it appears under the form of a fly than when it is seen under that of a *formica leo*, unless one should be inclined to maintain that organs can be formed and adapted to one another in consequence of the laws of movement. For to suppose that God has commissioned some intelligence to provide for the needs of these insects and preserve their species and always to form new ones out of these would be to humanise the divine Providence and to make it bear the character of a limited intelligence.

ARISTES. Assuredly, Theodore, there is a greater diversity of organs in the *formica leo* than in the fly, and for the same reason in the silkworm than in the butterfly, for these worms also strip themselves of many skins, because they give up a sort of head, a large number of feet, and all the other organs required for searching, devouring, directing and distributing the food adapted for grubs and butterflies. Similarly I see that there is more art in the eggs of grubs than in the grubs themselves, for, granted that the organic parts of grubs are in the egg, as you

say, it is clear that the whole egg involves more art than does the grub alone, and so on *ad infinitum.*

THEODORE. I wish you had read M. Malpighi's book on the silkworm, and what he has written about the formation of a chick within the egg.[1] You would see perhaps that what I am telling you is not without foundation. Yes, Aristes, the egg is the work of an infinite intelligence. Men do not find anything in the egg of the silkworm, and in the egg of a hen all they see is the white and yolk and perhaps the chalazæ or knots; yet they take them for the germ of the chick. But . . .

ARISTES. What! the germ of the chick! Are you referring to what one finds immediately on opening an egg, which is white and somewhat hard and rather unpleasant to eat?

THEODORE. No, Aristes; it is one of the knots which serves to keep the yolk suspended in the white in such a manner that in whatever way the egg be turned that side of the yolk which is the least heavy, or where the chick is, should always be upright against the warm breast of the hen. There are two of these knots which are attached on one side to the point of the egg and on the other to the yolk, one at each end.

ARISTES. What a wonderful mechanism!

THEODORE. In this there is not much intelligence. But you can see from this that more art and skill is required for the formation of an egg and all that it contains than of a mere chick, since the egg contains the chick, and has in addition its own particular structure.

VII. Conceive then now, if you can, I beg of you, what ought to be at present the construction of the organs of the egg or of the grubs which are to be butterflies six thousand years hence in consequence of the laws of motion. Admire, too, the variety of the organs of all the grubs and all the eggs which are contained in one another for all this time. Try to picture to yourself what the food could have been upon which the grubs and butterflies of to-day fed six thousand years ago. There is a great difference between the form of a demoiselle and that of a *formica leo*, but perhaps there is an equally great difference between the *formica leo* and the egg which contains it and so on. The silkworm feeds upon the leaves of the mulberry-tree, but the small grub contained within the egg feeds upon nothing;

[1] *De Bombyce.*

it has near it all that it needs. It is true that it does not always eat, but it maintains itself without eating, and it has been maintaining itself for six thousand years. It is looked upon as strange when certain animals spend the winter without any food. How marvellous is it, then, that silkworms should husband theirs so exactly, and that it should not fail them except when they are strong enough to break through their prison wall, and when the mulberry-trees have put forth tender leaves whereupon they can feed anew!

How wonderful is Providence in having enclosed, for example, within the eggs from which the chicks are hatched all that is needed to make them grow and even to feed them during the first days after they are hatched! For, as they do not yet know how to eat, and drop all that they peck up, the yolk of the egg, a half of which is not used up, and which remains in their stomach, feeds them and strengthens them. But this same Providence is seen even better in the neglected eggs which insects drop everywhere. It is necessary either that the hen should hatch its eggs itself, or that the industry of man should come to the rescue; but even if the insects' eggs are not hatched, the insects do not fail to come out very successfully. The sun through its heat stimulates them, so to speak, to devour their food at the same time as it prepares fresh food for them, and as soon as the grubs have broken through their prison walls they find themselves in an abundance, in the midst of young buds or tender leaves adapted to their needs. The insect to which they owe their birth has taken care to put them into a place suited for them, and has left the rest to the more general order of Providence. One insect lays its eggs underneath a folded leaf, attached to a branch, for fear that it might fall down in the winter; another fixes them in a safe place near their food; the demoiselle *formica leo* hides them in the sand, sheltered from the rain; most of them drop them in the water. In a word, they all put them in places where they can have their wants provided, not through any particular intelligence which guides them, but as a result of the arrangement of the parts making up their mechanism, and in consequence of the general laws of the communication of motion.

ARISTES. It is incomprehensible.

THEODORE. Quite true; but it is well to understand clearly that the providence of God is absolutely incomprehensible.

VIII. THEOTIMUS. I must tell you of an experiment which I have made. One day in the summer I took a small piece of meat, put it in a bottle, and covered it with a piece of silk. I observed that various flies came and laid their eggs or their grubs on the silk, and that as soon as they were hatched they gnawed through the silk and dropped upon the meat, which they devoured in a short time. As, however, this smelt badly I threw it all away.

THEODORE. In this way flies come from that which is putrefied. They lay their eggs or grubs on meat and forthwith fly away; the worms feed on it and the meat gets putrid. When these grubs have gorged themselves they enter into their cocoons and come out as flies, and on this ground most men believe that insects come from that which is putrefied.

THEOTIMUS. What you say is certain; for I have several times put some meat upon which no flies had yet been into a hermetically sealed flask, and I have never found any grubs in it.

ARISTES. But how is it that so many large grubs are to be found in all kinds of fruits?

THEODORE. They are full grown when we find them, but they were small when they came into the fruit. Search thoroughly and you will discover some little hole or scar in the skin. But let us not dwell any longer upon the proofs which are furnished to show that these animals owe their origin to putrefaction, for these proofs are so weak that they do not deserve refutation. Mice are found in newly made vessels or in a place where previously there were none. Hence it follows that this animal must have been generated out of matter in a state of putrefaction, as though these animals were forbidden to attend to their wants during the night, and to pass over the planks and over the ropes into boats, and from them into the large ships, or as though the vessels would not be built elsewhere than on the waterside! I cannot understand how so many people of good sense can fall into so gross and palpable an error on such slender evidence; for what can be more incomprehensible than that an animal should be formed by nature out of putrefied flesh? It is infinitely easier to conceive that a bit of rusty iron might be transformed into a perfect watch; for there are infinitely more contrivances and more delicate ones in a mouse than in the most complicated timepiece.

ARISTES. Assuredly, we cannot comprehend how a machine which is composed of an infinite number of different organs,

perfectly well adapted to one another and intended for different ends, can be the effect of the simple and natural laws that all bodies must move in the line of least resistance; for this law is much more calculated to destroy the machine than to produce it. Neither can we comprehend how animals of the same species, following one another in regular succession, could all be contained in the first of them.

THEODORE. If one does not understand how this can be, one understands at least that it is not impossible, since matter is infinitely divisible; but one will never understand how the laws of movement can produce bodies made up of an infinite number of organs. One finds it sufficiently difficult to conceive how these laws can bring about their growth little by little. What one does see quite well is that the laws in question can destroy them in a thousand different ways. One cannot see how the union of the two sexes can be the cause of pregnancy; but one can understand that this is not impossible on the assumption that the bodies are already formed. But that this union should be the cause of the organisation of the parts of the animal and of a particular animal, it seems to me one can see quite well is not possible.

ARISTES. I have heard, nevertheless, that M. Descartes had begun a treatise on the formation of the fœtus, in which he attempted to explain how an animal can be formed from the mingling of the semen of the two sexes.

THEODORE. The rough sketch given by this philosopher may help us to understand how the laws of motion are sufficient to bring about the gradual growth of the parts of an animal. But that these laws should form such parts and link them together is something that no one will ever prove. Apparently M. Descartes recognised this himself, for he did not press his ingenious conjectures very far.

ARISTES. His undertaking was somewhat bold.

THEODORE. Very bold, if he intended to give an account of the construction of animals, as God has made them; for they have an infinite number of appliances which he ought to have known before looking for the causes of their formation. But apparently he did not think of this; for he would not be wise who should seek to explain exactly how a watchmaker makes a watch without knowing beforehand of what parts this watch is composed.

ARISTES. This philosopher would, perhaps, have done better

to explain the generation of plants rather than that of animals by means of the laws of motion.

IX. THEODORE. By no means. The undertaking would have been equally impossible. If the seeds did not contain in miniature what we see on a large scale in plants, general laws could never render them fertile.

ARISTES. Plants in the seeds, an apple-tree in a kernel! One always finds it rather difficult to believe these things, though one knows quite well that matter is infinitely divisible.

THEOTIMUS. I have made an experiment which has contributed a good deal to convince me of it. Not that I believe, by any means, that, for example, the apple-tree which is in the germ of the kernel has the same proportions of magnitude and other qualities between its branches, leaves and fruits as large trees have; and assuredly Theodore does not maintain this either. I maintain merely that all the organic parts of the apple-tree are so formed and so well adapted to the laws of motion that through their own construction and the efficacy of these laws they can grow without the aid of a particular providence.

ARISTES. I understand your opinion quite well. Tell us about your experiment.

THEOTIMUS. I took, Aristes, about a score of the largest beans. I opened two or three, and I noticed that they were made up inside of two parts easily separable from one another, and which I found are called its cotyledons (or lobes); that the germ was attached to both of these lobes; that on one side it ended in a point tending outwards, and that on the other it was hidden between the lobes. That is what I saw at first. I sowed the other beans so as to make them germinate and to see how they grew. Two days afterwards I began to dig them up. I continued for fifteen days, and I noticed distinctly that the root was contained in that part of the germ which tends outwards and which ends in a point; that the plant was contained in that part of the germ which passes between the two lobes; that the root was itself a plant which had its roots in the substance of the two lobes of the bean from which it derived its food; that when it sprouted into the earth as plants do in the air, it abundantly furnished to the plant the necessary juice; that the plant as it grew passed between the lobes, which, after having contributed to the growth of the root, changed into leaves and protected the

plant from being injured by the air. In this way I convinced myself that the germ of the bean contained the root of the plant and the plant itself, and that the lobes of the bean were the store in which this small plant had already been sown and already had its roots. Take, Aristes, some of these large beans which are eaten in the beginning of the summer; open them gently; and examine them carefully. Without a microscope you will see to some extent what I have just been telling you. You will soon discover the first leaves of the plant in that small part of the germ folded up between the two lobes.[1]

ARISTES. I am ready to believe all this. But that this seed contains the plant which we may see in twenty years is something which it is difficult to imagine, and which your experiment does not prove.

THEOTIMUS. That is true; but we already see that the plant is in the seed, we see even without the aid of a microscope that even in the winter the tulip is in the bulb. We cannot at present see in the seed all the parts of the plant. Well, Aristes, we must try to imagine them. We cannot imagine how the plants which will appear twenty years hence are in the seed. We must try to conceive it; at least it is conceivable. But one does not see how plants can be formed solely in consequence of the general laws of the communication of motion. One cannot imagine how this can be so; one can still less conceive it. What reason, therefore, can one adduce in favour of it and against the view which Theodore has just put before us?

ARISTES. I should be very much inclined to believe that God preserves animals and plants by means of particular volitions, if Theodore had not pointed out to me that to remove from Providence its simplicity and generality would be to humanise it and to make it bear the character of a limited intelligence. We must, therefore, give up this idea and believe that God in the first impression of movement which He communicated to matter distributed it so wisely, that in one stroke He formed all animals and all plants for all generations. This is possible, since matter is infinitely divisible. And this is what has happened since this procedure is more worthy of the infinitely perfect Being than any other.

THEOTIMUS. Add to this, Aristes, that Scripture teaches us that now God rests, and that at first He did not merely make the

[1] Cf. *L'Anatomie des Plantes*, by M. Grew and M. Malpighi.

plants of the first year of the creation, but also the seeds for all the others. "And God said, let the earth put forth grass, herb yielding seed and fruit-tree yielding fruit after its kind, *wherein is the seed thereof*, upon the earth."[1] These last words, "wherein is the seed thereof," added to these: "And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made,"[2] indicate, it seems to me, that God, in order to preserve His creatures, no longer acts as He did when He made them. Now He acts in two ways alone, either by means of particular volitions or by general volitions or laws. He does nothing now, therefore, but follow His laws, unless He has good reasons which compel Him to interrupt the course of His providence—reasons which I do not believe you could find in the needs of animals or of plants.

X. ARISTES. No, doubtless not; for even if they were decreased by half their number, there would be only too many of them. For, pray tell me, Theodore, of what avail are all those many plants which are useless for our purpose, all those insects which annoy us? These small animals are the work of an infinite wisdom, I grant. But it is exactly this fact which is the source of my difficulty; for why produce so many excellent things to feed the swallows and devour our buds? Is it, Theodore, because the world would not be as perfect as it is if caterpillars and small insects did not strip the trees of their fruits and leaves?

THEODORE. If you judge, Aristes, of the works of God solely by their relation to you, you will soon blaspheme against Providence; you will soon entertain strange opinions about the wisdom of the Creator.

ARISTES. What! Is it not for the good of man that God has made everything?

THEODORE. Yes, Aristes, for the sake of that man to whom God has subjected everything without any exception; for the sake of that man of whom St. Paul speaks in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. God has made everything for the sake of His Son, everything for the sake of His Church, and His Church for His sake. But if He made flies for man, He did so assuredly in order to annoy and punish him. Most animals have parasites peculiar to them, but man has this advantage over them, that there are many different kinds for him alone, so true is it that God has made everything for him.

[1] Gen. i. 11. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 2.

It is in order to devour his corn that God made locusts. It is in order to sow his fields that He gave wings as it were to the seed of thistles. It is in order to wither his fruits that He produced insects differing infinitely in kind. In this sense, if God did not make everything for man, He came pretty near doing so.

Observe, Aristes, the infinite foresight of God. In accordance with this foresight, He was bound to regulate all His designs. Before giving to matter that first impression of movement which formed the universe for all generations, He knew clearly all the consequences of all the possible combinations of the physical with the moral, on the basis of all kinds of suppositions. He foresaw that under such and such circumstances man would sin, and that his sin would be communicated to all his posterity in consequence of the laws of the conjunction of soul and body.[1] Hence, because He willed to permit this fatal fall, He was bound to make use of His foresight and to combine the physical with the moral so wisely, that all His works should give rise between them and for all generations to the most beautiful harmony possible. And this marvellous harmony consists partly in the order of justice, that man having revolted against the Creator, which revolt God foresaw was bound to occur, all creatures should revolt so to speak against him, and punish him for his disobedience.[2] That is why there are so many different animals waging war upon us.

XI. ARISTES. What! Before man had sinned, had God already prepared the instruments of His vengeance? For you know that man was created only after everything else had been created. This seems to me very harsh.

THEODORE. Before his fall man had no enemies. His body and everything in his environment were in submission to him; he suffered no pain against his own will. It was just that God should protect him by means of a special providence, or that He should put him under the guardianship of some tutelary angel, in order to prevent any grevious consequences of the laws of the communication of motion. Had man preserved his innocence, God would always have had the same care for him, for He never fails to deal justly with His creatures. But now! do you not desire God to make use of His foresight and to choose the wisest

[1] *Recherche* II, ch. vii, and the *Éclaircissement* on this chapter.
[2] Eccl. xxxix. 35.

combination possible between the physical and the moral? Do you desire an infinitely wise Being not to make His action bear the character of His wisdom, or to have made man and have tried him before making the creatures which inconvenience us, or finally to have changed His plan and reformed His work after the fall of Adam? God, Aristes, never repents, never belies Himself. The first step which He takes is regulated by the foresight of all that is to follow it. Nay, indeed, God only decides to take this first step after having compared it not only with what is to follow it but with an infinity of other suppositions and other combinations of all kinds of the physical with the moral, and of the natural with the supernatural.

Once again, Aristes, God foresaw that man under such and such circumstances would revolt. After having compared everything, He thought that He ought to permit the Fall. I say permit because He did not compel man to fall. Hence by a wise combination of the physical with the moral He had to make His action bear the mark of His foresight. But, say you, has He, then, before the Fall prepared the instruments of His vengeance? Why not, if He foresaw this Fall and willed to punish it? Had God made man unhappy when innocent, had He made use of those instruments before the Fall, one would have had cause for complaint. But is it forbidden to a father to keep some rods ready for chastising his child, especially if he foresees that the child will not fail to disobey him? Ought he not even to show him these menacing rods in order to keep him on the path of duty? Can one doubt that bears and lions were created before the Fall? And is it not enough to believe that these cruel beasts whom God uses now for our punishment respected in Adam his innocence and the Divine Majesty? But if you find it ill that before the Fall God should have prepared instruments for punishing it, console yourself; for by His foresight He also found the remedy for this evil before it had occurred. Certainly, before the Fall of the first man God had already designed to sanctify His Church through Jesus Christ; for St. Paul teaches us that, in their marriage which preceded the Fall, Adam and Eve were the symbol of Jesus Christ and His Church. "This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church,"[1] the first Adam being, till his Fall, the figure of Him that was to come.[2] God's foresight being

[1] Eph. v. 32.

[2] Rom. v. 14.

infinite, everything, Aristes, is regulated in accordance with it. God permitted the Fall. Why? Because He foresaw that His work retrieved in a certain manner would be of greater value than the same work as at first constructed. He laid down general laws, in accordance with which the fields were to suffer from ice and hail; He created cruel beasts and an infinite number of very incommodious animals. Why? Because He foresaw the Fall. He instituted an infinite number of marvellous connections between all these works. He typified Jesus Christ and His Church in a thousand ways. This is an effect and a sure indication of His foresight and wisdom. Do not think it ill, then, that God made use of His foresight, and that He has once and for all wisely combined the physical with the moral, not for the short time during which the first man was to preserve his innocence, but having regard to him and all his children as they were to be to the end of all generations. Adam could not complain of the animals devouring one another, while they rendered to him, as their sovereign, the respect which was his due. Rather was he bound to learn from this fact that they were only brutes, incapable of reason, and that God had distinguished him from among all His creatures.

XII. ARISTES. I thoroughly appreciate what you are saying. God had good reasons for the creation of large animals capable of punishing us. But why so many small insects that do us neither good nor evil and the mechanism of which is perhaps even more wonderful than that of the large animals, a mechanism, moreover, which is hidden from us, and which does not cause us to recognise the wisdom of the Creator?

THEODORE. Without stopping to prove to you that there is no animal, however small, which cannot in one way or another stand in some relation to us, I reply that the main design of God in the formation of these small insects was not to do us any good or evil by their means, but to adorn the universe with works worthy of His wisdom and of His other attributes. Most men despise insects, but there are some who have regard for them. Apparently, the angels themselves admire them. But even if all intelligent minds ignore them, the fact that these small animals express the divine perfections and render the universe more perfect in itself, though less comfortable for sinners, is sufficient reason for their creation, granting that God was able to preserve them

without multiplying His ways; for God has assuredly made the most perfect work by the simplest and most general means. He foresaw that the laws of movements were sufficient to preserve in the world any species of insects you like. He willed to make all possible use of His laws in order to render His work more finished. He, therefore, made from the very first whole species of this insect by means of a wonderful division of a certain portion of matter; for it is necessary always to bear well in mind that it is by means of movement that everything is effected in bodies, and that, in the first determination of movements, it was a matter of indifference to God whether the bodies should be made in one way or another, there being no general laws of the communication of movements before bodies had come into contact with one another.[1]

ARISTES. I see that, Theodore. A world filled with an infinity of animals small and large is more beautiful and reveals greater intelligence than another world wherein there are no insects. Now, such a world does not cost God, so to speak, any more than another, nor does it require a more complex and particular Providence, and consequently it bears just as well as any other world the character of the divine immutability. It should not, therefore, surprise us to find that God has made so large a number of insects.

XIII. THEODORE. What we are saying now, Aristes, is general in character and does not exclude an infinity of reasons which God had for making the world in the way He did.

ARISTES. I must tell you, Theodore, of a thought which occurred to me when you spoke of the apparent transformation of insects. Worms creep upon the earth. There they lead a sad and debasing life. But they make for themselves a tomb whence they come out glorious. I thought that by this God desired to typify the life, death and resurrection of His Son, and even of all Christians.

THEODORE. I am very glad, Aristes, that this thought should have occurred to you, for though it seems to me quite sound, I should not have dared to propose it to you.

ARISTES. Why not?

THEODORE. Because it has something base in it which displeases the imagination. Besides, this word alone,—namely,

[1] Dialogue X, 17.

worm or insect,—when joined to the great idea which we ought to have of the Saviour, may excite ridicule; for I suppose you know that the ridiculous consists in the junction of the small with the great.

ARISTES. Yes; but what seems ridiculous to the imagination is often very reasonable and just; for often enough do we despise what we do not know.

THEODORE. Quite true, Aristes. The lily of the field which we neglect is more finely arrayed than Solomon in all his glory. Jesus Christ did not fear ridicule when He advanced this paradox. The imagination is satisfied, as well as the reason, when one compares the magnificence of King Solomon with the glory of the resurrected Jesus Christ. But it is not satisfied when one seeks in the beauty of the lilies an image of the Saviour. Nevertheless, Solomon's magnificence was but the work of man, whereas it is God who has given to the flowers all their adornments.

ARISTES. Do you think, then, that God has typified Jesus Christ in plants as well as in insects?

THEODORE. I believe, Aristes, that God has connected everything with Jesus Christ in a thousand different ways, and that created things not only express the divine perfections, but are also as much as that is possible emblems of His well-beloved Son. The seed which one sows must, so to speak, die in order to be resuscitated and yield its fruit. I think that this is a natural symbol of Jesus Christ, who died in order to come to life again gloriously. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."[1]

THEOTIMUS. One can make use of whatever one likes for the purpose of comparisons. But it does not follow on that account that God desired to symbolise Jesus Christ by means of all the things which have but an arbitrary relation to Him.

THEODORE. If I did not know, Theotimus, that God's principal design is Jesus Christ and His Church; that nothing is acceptable to God except through Jesus Christ; and that it is in Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ that the universe subsists, because there is no one but Jesus Christ to sanctify it, extract it from its profane state, and render it divine,[2] I should look upon what I now take to be natural symbols as arbitrary and quite unworthy comparisons. Yes, Theotimus, I believe that

[1] John xii. 24. [2] Dialogue IX, 6.

God had Jesus Christ so much in view when He formed the universe that perhaps the most wonderful thing in providence is the relation or connection which it establishes incessantly between the natural and the supernatural, between what happens in the world and what occurs in the Church of Jesus Christ.

XIV. ARISTES. Assuredly, Theotimus, that in the transformations of insects God desired to symbolise Jesus Christ is a fact which stares us in the face. A worm is despicable and impotent; was not Jesus Christ despised? "But I am a worm and no man; a reproach of men and despised of the people."[1] Was He not burdened with our infirmities and our weakness? "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows."[2] A worm shuts itself up in its tomb and revives sometime afterwards without being corrupted. Jesus Christ, too, died and rose, without His body having been subjected to the power of corruption; "neither did His flesh see corruption."[3] The resurrected worm has a body which is, so to speak, all spirit. It does not creep, it flies. It no longer feeds upon putrefied things, it only seeks flowers. It has nothing despicable; a more magnificent adornment it could not have. In the same way Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and was overwhelmed with glory; He rose into the heavens, He no longer crept about, so to speak, in Judea from village to village. He was no longer subject to the weakness and infirmity of His laborious life. He rules over all the nations, and can break them as one breaks an earthen pot, as the Scripture saith.[4] Supreme power was given to Him in heaven and upon earth. Can it be said that this analogy is arbitrary? Assuredly it is natural.

THEODORE. You are forgetting, Aristes, some points of resemblance too close to be neglected.

ARISTES. What are they?

THEODORE. These worms before their transformation keep on growing. But flies, butterflies and generally everything that flies after having been a worm, all that has undergone transformation, remains ever in the same state.

ARISTES. It is so because on earth one can keep on increasing one's merits, whereas in heaven one remains as one is.

THEODORE. I have noted that insects do not procreate unless they are resuscitated and, so to speak, glorified.

[1] Ps. xxii. 6. [2] Isa. liii. 4. [3] Acts ii. 31. [4] Ps. cx.

ARISTES. You are right. It is because Jesus Christ only sent the Holy Spirit to His Church, only rendered it fruitful, after His resurrection and after He had entered into possession of His glory. "For the Spirit was not yet given," says St. John,[1] "because Jesus was not yet glorified"; and Jesus Christ Himself said, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you."[2] I am no longer surprised that God has made such a large number of insects.

THEODORE. If God takes pleasure in His work, Theotimus, it is because He sees everywhere in it his well-beloved Son; for we ourselves are acceptable to God, only because we are expressions of Jesus Christ. Matter cannot, through the modification of which it is capable, express exactly the inner disposition of the saintly soul of Jesus, His charity, His humility, His patience. But it can very well imitate the different forms which His adorable body assumes. And I think that the honour which the arrangement of matter, that symbolises Jesus Christ and His Church, does to the love of the Father for the Son is greater than the honour which any other arrangement might do to His wisdom and to His other attributes.

ARISTES. Perhaps even it is in the arrangements of matter suited to typify Jesus Christ that there is most skill and intelligence; for when a living animal makes for itself a tomb in order to shut itself up therein and to rise from it gloriously, can one conceive a more wonderful mechanism than that through which these movements are executed?

THEOTIMUS. I quite see your point, and, moreover, Theodore, I believe that God has even symbolised in the dispositions of bodies those of the saintly soul of Jesus, and principally the excess of His love for His Church; for St. Paul teaches us[3] that this violent passion of love which causes one to leave one's father and mother for the sake of one's wife is an image of the excess of the love of Jesus for His spouse. Now, though animals, strictly speaking, are incapable of love, they express in their movements this great passion and reproduce their species almost in the manner of men. They, therefore, typify naturally this violent love of Jesus Christ, which caused Him to shed His blood for His Church. In fact, to express emphatically and vividly the

[1] John vii. 39. [2] *Ibid.* xvi. 7. [3] Eph. v.

folly of the cross, the annihilation of the Son of God, the excess of His love for mankind, a blind and wanton passion, so to speak, would be necessary, a passion which knows no limits.

ARISTES. Let us admire, then, the incomprehensible wisdom of the Creator in the wonderful relations which He has established amongst His works, and let us not regard as useless those created things which perhaps do us neither good nor evil; they render God's work more perfect; they express the divine perfections; they are symbols of Jesus Christ. It is that which constitutes their excellence and their beauty.

THEODORE. Quite so, Aristes. But since God loves His creatures only in proportion to the relation in which they stand to His perfections, only in so far as they are expressions of His Son, let us be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect, and let us shape ourselves in accordance with the model which He has given us in His Son. It is not enough for Christians to typify Jesus Christ as the animals and material things do, or even as Solomon did by the outward show of a brilliant glory. It is necessary to imitate His virtues, those virtues which He practised during His humiliating and painful life, those virtues which are suitable for us whilst we creep upon the earth, well knowing that a new life is reserved for us in heaven, where we expect our glorious transformation. "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." [1]

[1] Phil. iii. 20, 21.

TWELFTH DIALOGUE

The Divine Providence in the laws of the conjunction of soul and body—Through this conjunction God brings us into relation with all His works—The laws of the union of the mind with Reason—The formation of societies through these two sorts of law—The distribution among men, through the aid of the angels, of temporary goods, and through Jesus Christ of inner grace and all kinds of good—The generality of Providence.

ARISTES. Ah, Theodore, how wonderful God is in His works, what depth there is in His designs, what relations and combinations of relations He had to compare in order to give to matter that first impression which formed the universe with all its parts, not for one moment, but for all generations! What wisdom there is in the subordination of causes, in the interlinking of effects, in the conjunction of all the bodies which make up the world, in the infinite combinations, not only of the physical with the physical, but of the physical with the moral, and of both with the supernatural!

THEODORE. If the mere arrangement of matter, if the necessary effects of certain very simple and very general laws of motion, appear to us to be something so very marvellous, what ought we to think of the different societies which arise and maintain themselves in consequence of the laws of the conjunction of the soul and body? What ought we to say of the Jewish people and its religion, and finally of the Church of Jesus Christ? What should we think, my dear Aristes, of the heavenly Jerusalem, if we had a clear idea of the nature of the material out of which this saintly city will be constructed, and could form a conception of the order and harmony of all the parts of which it will be composed? For, after all, if out of the vilest of created things, out of matter namely, God has made so magnificent a world, what ought to be the temple of the true Solomon, a temple which will be constructed only out of intelligent spirits? It is the impact of bodies which determines the efficacy of natural

laws; and this occasional cause, blind and simple though it be, produces, through the wisdom of the providence of the Creator, an infinity of wonderful works. What, then, will be the beauty of the house of God, being as it is an intelligent nature, illumined by the eternal wisdom, and subsisting in the eternal wisdom; for, as I shall soon explain, it is Jesus Christ who determines the efficacy of the supernatural laws by the aid of which God executes this great work? How magnificent this temple of the true Solomon will be! Will not this universe be so much the more perfect because souls are more perfect than bodies and the occasional cause of the order of grace is more excellent than that which determines the efficacy of natural laws? Assuredly, God is always like unto Himself. His wisdom is not exhausted by the wonders which He has accomplished. He will no doubt produce out of the realm of spirit beauties which will infinitely surpass all that He has made out of matter. What do you think of this, my dear Aristes?

ARISTES. I think, Theodore, you delight in precipitating me from abyss to abyss.

THEODORE. Yes, from deep abysses into still deeper ones. Do you want to consider only the beauties of this visible world, only the providence of the Creator, in the division of matter, in the formation and arrangement of bodies? This earth which we inhabit is made only for the sake of the societies which arise thereon. If men are capable of building up societies, it is in order to serve God in one and the same religion. Everything is by nature connected with or related to the Church of Jesus Christ, to the spiritual temple wherein God is to dwell for all eternity. We must not, therefore, linger over the first abyss of God's providence in the division of matter and the arrangement of bodies; we must leave this abyss in order to enter into a second, and thence into a third, until we arrive where all things terminate and where God brings all things into connection. For it is not enough to believe and to say that God's providence is incomprehensible; it is necessary to know this, to understand it. And in order to make sure to ourselves that it is incomprehensible in every way, we must try to consider it in every sense and to follow it up everywhere.

ARISTES. But we shall never exhaust the subject of Providence if we follow it up into the heavens.

THEODORE. Yes, if we follow it up there; but we shall soon lose sight of it. We shall be obliged, Aristes, to pass over lightly what ought to detain us most, whether on account of the magnificence of the work, or on account of the wisdom of its management. For the providence of God over His Church is an abyss in which even the mind illumined by faith can hardly discover anything. But let us come to the point.

I. You know, Aristes, that man is composed of two substances, soul and body, the modifications of which are reciprocal as a result of the general laws, which are the causes of the conjunction of these two natures; and you are not ignorant of the fact that these laws are nothing but the constant and ever effective volitions of the Creator. Let us just glance at the wisdom of these laws.

At the moment a torch is lighted, or the sun rises, it sheds light in all directions, or rather it pushes the matter of its environment in all directions. The surfaces of bodies being variously situated, they reflect the light in different ways, or rather, they modify in different ways the pressure which the sun causes. (Picture this to yourself in any way you please, it matters not at present. For my part I believe that these modifications of pressure consist merely in vibrations or disturbances which the subtle matter receives from that which touches it lightly in gliding incessantly over the surface of the bodies between it and these same bodies.) All these vibrations or modes of pressure, alternatively more or less strong, spread out and are communicated in circular fashion from all sides, and in an instant because there is no void. Thus, so soon as one opens one's eyes, all the rays of light reflected from the surface of bodies, and entering through the apple of the eye, disperse in the humours of the eye in order to become united again in the optic nerve. (The mechanism of the eye is a wonderful thing when considered in relation to the action of light, but with this we cannot deal at present. Those who wish to study this subject can consult the *Dioptric* of M. Descartes.) The optic nerve is thus affected in several different ways by the diverse vibrations of matter which freely come into contact with it, the affections of this nerve are communicated to that part of the brain with which the soul is closely united.

Whence it happens, in consequence of the laws of conjunction of soul and body,—

II. 1. That we are given warning of the presence of objects. For, though bodies are in themselves invisible, the sensations of colour which we have in ourselves, and even despite ourselves on the occasion of their presence, make us believe that we see them as they are, because the operation of God upon us has nothing sensuous in it. And since colours affect us lightly, we attribute them to objects, instead of looking upon them as sensations which belong to us. In this way we judge that objects exist, and that they are white and black, red and blue—in a word, such as we see them.

2. Although the different kinds of the reflected light of objects consist merely in vibrations of pressure more or less rapid, nevertheless the sensations of colour which correspond to these vibrations or modifications of light have essential differences, in order that by this means we may distinguish objects from one another the more easily.

3. Thus, through the sensible different kinds of colours which determine in an exact manner the intelligible parts which we find in the idea of space or extension, we discern in one glance an infinity of different objects, their magnitude, figure, situation, movement or rest; all this with great exactness so far as the preservation of life is concerned, but otherwise confusedly and very imperfectly; for we must always remember that the senses are not given to us in order to reveal to us the truth, or to indicate the exact relations subsisting amongst things, but in order to preserve our body and everything that may be of use to it. As everything that we see is not, for example, always either good or bad for our health, and as often two different objects may reflect the light in the same way (for are not many objects equally white or black?), the sensations that we have of colour hardly touch or affect us. They are of use to us in distinguishing objects rather than in uniting ourselves to or separating ourselves from them. It is to the objects that we refer these sensations, and not to the eyes which receive the impression of light. For we always refer our sensations to that a reference to which is conducive to the good of the body. We refer the pain of a pin-prick, not to the pin, but to the pricked finger. We refer heat, smell, taste, both

to the organs and to objects. As to colour, it is referred to objects alone. It is clear that all this must be for the good of the body, and it is not necessary for me to explain it to you.

III. This, Aristes, is what seems to be the simplest and most general aspect of the sensations of colour. Let us now just see how all this is accomplished; for it seems to me that an infinite wisdom is necessary to regulate these details of the colours in such a way as to cause us to see near or distant objects almost in accordance with their magnitude. When I say distant I do not mean that they are distant to an excessive degree; for when bodies are so small or so distant that they can do us neither good nor harm, they escape our notice.

ARISTES. Assuredly, Theodore, an infinite wisdom is necessary in order to bring about at each twinkling of the eye this distribution of colours upon the idea which I have of space, in such a manner that out of it there should be formed, so to speak, within my soul a new world and a world which stands in a sufficiently clear relation with the world in which we dwell. But I doubt whether God is so exact in the sensations which He causes in us; for I know that the sun does not decrease in magnitude in proportion as it gets further away from the horizon, and yet it appears to me smaller.

THEODORE. But at least you are sure that God is always exact in causing you to see the sun as becoming smaller in proportion as it gets further away from the horizon. This exactness means something, Aristes.

ARISTES. I believe it does; but how does it come about?

THEODORE. It comes about because God, in consequence of these laws, gives us all at once those sensations of colours which we should give to ourselves if we knew optics as the Divine Being does, if we were thoroughly familiar with all the relations subsisting amongst the figures of the bodies which project themselves into the interior of our eyes; for God only determines Himself to act upon our souls in any particular manner through the changes which take place in our body; He acts upon it as though He knew nothing of what takes place outside, by the knowledge which He has of what takes place in our organs. This is the principle; let us follow it up.

The more distant an object is, the smaller is the image which is traced in the interior of the eye. Now, when the sun rises or

sets, it appears further away from us than at noon, not only because we see a great deal of land between ourselves and the horizon where the sun is then, but also because the sky looks like a flattened spheroid. Hence the image of the rising sun in the interior of our eyes ought to be smaller than that of the sun when it has risen. But it is equal, or nearly equal; hence the sun must appear larger when it is near the horizon than when it is elevated above the horizon.

THEOTIMUS. I have made an experiment which proves the truth of what you are saying, namely, that the reason why the sun appears to change in magnitude is that it appears noticably to change its distance. I took a piece of glass covered with smoke in such a way as that looking through it I saw nothing but the sun, and I noticed that this apparent magnitude disappeared every time I looked at it through the glass, because, as the smoke shut out all the other objects between ourselves and the horizon, I could no longer sensibly see the distance beyond which I could place the sun.

ARISTES. Would not this be due to the fact that the glass, darkened by the smoke, admitted only a few rays to the eye?

THEOTIMUS. No, Aristes, for when far above the horizon the sun always appeared to me to be of the same magnitude, whether I looked at it through the glass or not.

ARISTES. That is conclusive.

IV. THEODORE. Observe then, Aristes, that although you are persuaded that the sun is not smaller at noon than in the evening, it nevertheless appears to you much smaller, and learn from this fact that the sensation of a luminous circle which represents this star to you comes to indicate exactly a certain magnitude, only by reference to the colours of all the objects which we see between ourselves and it, since it is the sensuous view of those objects which makes us believe it distant. Learn from this also that all apparent magnitudes, not only of the sun, but generally of everything that we see, ought to be regulated by reasoning similar to that which I have just submitted to you, in order to account for the different appearances of the magnitude of the sun; and comprehend if you can the wisdom of the Creator, who, without hesitation on your aprt, so soon as your eyes are open, gives you an infinity of different sensations of colour, of an infinity of different objects,—sensations which indicate to you their

difference and their magnitude, not in proportion to the difference and the size of the images which are traced in your eyes, but—and this is to be noted—determined by the most exact optical reasons possible.

ARISTES. In this I do not wonder so much at the wisdom, accuracy and uniformity of the Creator as at the stupidity of those philosophers who imagine that it is the soul itself which forms ideas of all the objects of our environment. I admit, nevertheless, that an infinite wisdom is necessary in order to effect within our soul, as soon as we open our eyes, that distribution of colours which partially reveals to us how the world is made. But I would that our senses never deceived us, at least in matters of importance, and not in so palpable a way. The other day, as I was walking quickly down by the river, it appeared to me as though the trees on the shore were moving, and I have a friend who often sees things turning in front of him so that he cannot keep upright. These are very palpable and troublesome illusions.

V. THEODORE. God was unable, Aristes, to contrive things better if He willed to act upon us by means of certain general laws; for you must remember the principle which I have been indicating to you. The occasional causes of that which is to take place in the soul are to be found only in what takes place in the body, since it is the soul and the body which God has willed to join together. Thus, God can be determined to act upon our soul in any particular manner only by the different changes which occur in the body. He must not act upon it as though He knew what is taking place outside us, but as though He knew of all the things of our environment only through the knowledge which He has of what is taking place in our organs. Once again, Aristes, this is the principle. Imagine that your soul knows exactly of everything new that is taking place in its body and that it gives itself all those feelings or sensations which are best adapted to further the preservation of life; that will be exactly what God does in it.

You are walking, let us say, and your soul has an inner feeling of the movements which are taking place at the moment in your body. Accordingly, though the traces of the objects within your eyes shift their position, your soul sees those objects as immobile. But supposing you are in a ship. You do not feel

that you are being moved, since the movement of the ship effects no change in your body which could serve as an indication to you. The whole shore ought, therefore, to appear to you to be moving, since the images of the objects within your eyes keep on changing their position continually.

Similarly, if you bend your head, or turn your eyes, or look at a clock from between your legs, you ought not to see it turned upside down; for, though the image of the clock be inverted in your eyes, or rather in your brain, since the images of objects within the eyes are always inverted, your soul, being aware of the position of your body through the changes effected by this position in your brain, must conclude that the clock is upright.

Now, once more, God in consequence of the laws of the conjunction of soul and body gives us sensations of objects in the same way as our own soul would give them, if it could reason in an exact manner about the knowledge which it should have of what takes place in the body or in the principal part of the brain. But note that the knowledge we have of the magnitude or situation of objects does not help us at all in rectifying our sensations, unless this knowledge is sensuous and is acquired at the moment through some change then taking place in the brain; for, though I know that the sun is not larger in the evening or morning than at noon, it appears to me larger all the same; though I know the shore is not moving, it nevertheless seems to me to be moving; though I know that a certain medicine is good for me, I nevertheless find it unpleasant; and so on with the other feelings or sensations, because God regulates the sensations which He gives to us only by the activity of the occasional cause which He has established for that purpose, that is to say, only by the changes of that principal part of our body to which our soul is immediately united. Now, it happens occasionally that the flow of the animal spirits is so impetuous and irregular that it prevents the present change in the arrangement of the nerves and muscles from being communicated to this principal part of the brain, and then everything is upside down, one sees two objects instead of one, one can no longer maintain one's equilibrium in order to remain upright, and this is perhaps what happens to your friend. Yet what would you have? The laws of the union of body and soul are infinitely wise and always exactly followed; but the occa-

sional cause which determines the efficacy of those laws often fails at the moment of need because the laws of the communication of movements are not in submission to our wills.

ARISTES. What order and wisdom there is in the laws of the conjunction of soul and body! As soon as we open our eyes we see an infinity of different objects and their different relations without any effort on our part. Assuredly, nothing is more marvellous, though no one reflects upon the matter.

VI. THEODORE. Through this means God not only discloses His works to us, but He unites us to them in a thousand different ways. If, for example, I see a child about to fall, the mere fact of my seeing it, the mere affection of my optic nerve, will let loose in my brain certain contrivances which will make me step forward to help him and to cry out to others to help him; and, at the same time, my soul will be touched and moved, as it ought to be for the good of the human race. If I look into a man's face, I can see whether he is sad or happy, whether he esteems or despises me, whether he wishes me good or ill—all this through certain movements of eyes and lips which have no relation with what they signify; for when a dog shows me his teeth I conclude that he is angry, but though a man were to show me his teeth I should not think that he wished to bite me. A man's laugh inspires me with confidence, the bark of a dog with fear. Painters who wish to represent the passions are often embarrassed; they often take one expression of the face, or one grimace, for another. But when a man is moved by some passion, those who look at him notice this quite well, though perhaps they do not notice whether his lips are raised or not, whether his nose turns up or not, whether his eyes open or close. That is so because God joins us together by means of the laws of the conjunction of soul and body; and not only men with men but also each creature with all else that may be of use to it, each in its own way; for if I see, for example, my dog fawning upon me, i.e. wagging his tail, bending his back, lowering his head, the sight of this binds me to him and gives rise in my soul not only to a kind of friendship but even to certain movements in my body which in turn also attach him to me. And what occasions the love of a man for his dog, or the fidelity of the dog towards his master, is a little light liberating certain contrivances in the organisms combined

by the wisdom of the Creator in such a way that they should mutually conserve one another. This is common to both of them; but man has, besides the mechanism of the body, also a soul, and consequently feelings and movements corresponding to the changes that occur in his body; the dog, on the other hand, is a pure mechanism, whose movements, which are adapted to their ends, ought to make us admire the infinite intelligence of Him who constructed it.

ARISTES. I understand, Theodore, that the laws of the conjunction of soul and body serve not only to unite our mind to a certain portion of matter, but also to the rest of the universe, to certain parts, of course, much more than to others, according as they are the more needed by us. My soul diffuses itself, so to speak, in my body by means of pleasure and pain. It separates itself therefrom by means of the other less vivid feelings. And through light and colour it reaches everywhere even to the skies. It interests itself even in what takes place there. It examines the celestial movements, it is pained by, or rejoices in, the phenomena which it observes, and brings them all into relation with itself as though it had a right to all created things. Truly wonderful is this chain of connections!

VII. THEODORE. Consider rather the consequences of these laws in the establishment of societies, in the education of children, in the growth of the sciences, in the formation of the Church. How is it that you know me? You only see my face, a certain arrangement of matter visible only through its colours. I disturb the air with my words. This air strikes your ear and you become aware of what I am thinking. We not only train our children as we do horses and dogs, we also inspire them with sentiments of honour and honesty. In your books you have the opinions of philosophers and the history of all the centuries; but without the laws of the conjunction of soul and body your whole library would be of no greater use than so much black and white paper. Follow these laws in the case of religion. How is it that you are a Christian? You are a Christian because you are not deaf. It is through our ears that faith is poured into our hearts. It is because of the miracles we have seen that we are certain of those which we do not see. It is through the power which these laws give us that the minister of Jesus Christ is able to move his tongue in order to preach the gospel and

to absolve us from our sins. It is evident that these laws are of paramount importance in religion, morality, in the sciences, in societies, for the good of the whole and for the good of each. It follows that they constitute one of the most important means of which God avails Himself, in the ordinary course of His providence, for the maintenance of the universe and the realisation of His designs.

VIII. Now, consider how many relations and combinations of relations had to be discerned in order to establish these wonderful laws, and in order so to apply them to their effects as to make all the consequences of these laws the best and the most worthy of God. Do not consider these laws only in relation to the preservation of the human species. That is as yet infinitely beyond us. But do not despair: compare them with all the things to which they are related, however despicable they may appear to you. Why, for example, have not wheat and barley small wings such as thistles and teasels possess, so that they might be transported and scattered over the fields by the wind? Is it not because God foresaw that men who cleared those fields of thistles would take enough trouble to sow wheat in them? How is it that the dog has so fine a sense of smell for the odours emitted by animals and that he cannot smell flowers? Is that not so because God foresaw that man and this animal would go together to the chase? If God, when He created plants and animals, took into consideration the use men would make of the power which they have as as a result of the laws of the conjunction of soul and body, assuredly He would not have neglected anything needed to make these laws have consequences advantageous to society and religion. Judge, then, of the incomprehensible wisdom of God's Providence in the establishment of these laws as you have judged of it in the case of the first impression of movement which he communicated to matter when he formed the universe.

ARISTES. The mind loses itself in reflections of this sort.

THEOTIMUS. That is true; but it does not fail to apprehend that the wisdom of God in His general providence is incomprehensible in every way.

IX. THEODORE. Let us, then, continue. The mind of man is united to his body in such a manner that through his

body he is connected with everything in his environment, not only with sensible objects, but also with invisible substances, since men are attached to one another and joined together by means of the mind as well as of the body, all this in consequence of general laws of which God avails Himself in governing the world; and this is what is marvellous in Providence. The mind of man is also united to God, to the eternal Wisdom, the universal Reason which enlightens all intelligent beings. And it is united to Him also through the general laws of which our attention is the occasional cause, determining their efficacy. The disturbances which arise in my brain are the occasional or natural causes of my sensations. But the occasional cause of the presence of ideas to my mind is my attention. I can think of whatever I like. It depends upon me whether I shall examine the subject upon which we are engaged or any other subject; but it does not depend upon me whether I shall feel pleasure, hear music, or see such and such a colour. That is so because we are not made to know the relations subsisting between the objects of sense and our body; for it would not be apt that the soul should be compelled, in order to preserve life, to attend to everything that may deprive us of life. It was necessary that it should be able to discern any such threatening object by the short but sure testimony of instinct or sensation, so that it might devote itself entirely to the fulfilment of its duties to God, and to the search after the true goods, the goods of the spirit. It is true that at present our feelings introduce trouble and confusion into our ideas, and that on that account we do not always think of what we wish to think. But that is a consequence of the Fall, and if God permitted the Fall it was because He knew that it would give occasion to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, from which He derives more glory than from the preservation of the first man. Besides, since Adam had all the assistance necessary for his preservation, God was not constrained to give him that predisposing grace which is suitable only for a weak and feeble nature. But this is not the time to examine the reasons why God permitted the Fall.

X. It is then our attention which is the occasional or natural cause of the presence of ideas to our mind in consequence of the general laws of its union with the universal Reason. And God was bound to arrange it thus in accordance with His

design of making us perfectly free and capable of deserving heaven; for it is clear that if the first man had not been master of his ideas by means of his attention, his inattention would not have been voluntary,—that inattention which was the first cause of his disobedience. Since we cannot love except through our love of the good, we determine ourselves always to that which appears to us to be the best at the moment when we determine ourselves. It follows that if we were never masters of our attention, or if our attention were not the natural cause of our ideas, we should neither be free nor in a position to merit freedom, as we should not even be able to refuse our consent, seeing that we should not have the power to consider the reason which might induce us to do so. Now, God desired that we should be free, not only because this quality is necessary for us in order that we should merit heaven for which we were made, but also because He desired to make the wisdom of His providence shine forth, as also His quality of searching all hearts, thus using in a happy way both free causes and necessary causes in the realisation of His designs.

For you must know that God establishes all societies, that He governs all the nations, the Jewish people, the Church of the present and the Church of the future, by the general laws of the union of spirits with the eternal Wisdom. It is by the aid of this Wisdom that sovereigns reign happily and lay down excellent laws. "By me kings reign and princes decree justice."[1] It is, indeed, by consulting it that the wicked succeed in their pernicious designs; for in consequence of the general laws one can make use of the light of Reason to further injustice. If a good bishop watches over his flock, if he sanctifies it, if God makes use of him in order to put certain people among the elect, it is partly due to the fact that this minister of Jesus Christ consults Reason through his attention to the order of his duties. And if, on the contrary, a miserable wretch corrupts the minds and hearts of those who look to him for guidance, if God permits him to be the cause of their ruin, it is partly due to the fact that this minister of the devil abuses the light which he receives from God in consequence of the natural laws. The angels, all the blessed spirits, and even the saintly manhood of Jesus Christ, though each in a different manner, are all united to the eternal Wisdom. Their attention

[1] Prov. viii. 15.

is the occasional and natural cause of their knowledge. Now, Jesus Christ governs souls, while the angels have power over bodies. God makes use of Jesus in order to sanctify His Church, just as He made use of the angels in order to guide the Jewish people. Since, therefore, all the blessed spirits, even more than ourselves, always consult the eternal Wisdom in order to do anything which does not conform to the order of things, it is clear that God makes use of the general laws of the union of spirits with the infinite Reason in order to carry into effect all the designs which He has entrusted to intelligent beings. He even avails Himself of the malice of demons, and of the use which He foresaw with certainty that they would make of the natural light which was left to them. Not that God acts at every moment by means of particular volitions, but that He only laid down certain laws for certain circumstances, because He knew what wonderful effects would follow from them; for His foresight has no limits, and His foresight is the rule of His providence.

XI. ARISTES. It seems to me, Theodore, that you are considering the wisdom of Providence only in the establishment of general laws and in the interlinking of causes with their effects, making all creatures act in accordance with their nature, the free creatures freely, and the necessitated according to the power which they have in consequence of the general laws. You want me to admire and adore the impenetrable profundity of God's foresight in the infinitely infinite combinations which He had to make in order to choose from out an infinity of ways in which the universe could be produced that way which He had to follow in order to act in the most divine manner possible. Assuredly, Theodore, this is the most beautiful feature in the action of Providence, but not the most agreeable one. This infinite foresight is the basis of that generality and uniformity of procedure which bear the character of the wisdom and immutability of God; but it does not, it seems to me, bear the character of His goodness towards men, nor of the severity of His justice against the wicked. It is not possible for God, acting by means of a general providence, to punish those who do us any injustice, nor to provide for all our needs. And how can we be content so long as something is still lacking? Thus, Theodore, I admire your Providence, but I am not quite satisfied

with it. It is excellent for God, but not altogether good for us; for I want God to provide for all His creatures.

THEODORE. He does provide for them quite abundantly. Do you want me to set forth the blessings of the Creator?

ARISTES. I know that God bestows upon us thousands of blessings every day. It would seem that the whole world exists only for us.

THEODORE. What more do you want?

ARISTES. That we should be in want of nothing. God has made all things for our sake, yet So-and-so has no bread. A Providence that would give equal shares to all equally deserving creatures, and that would distribute good and ill exactly according to deserts, would be a veritable Providence. Of what avail is the infinite number of stars? What does it matter whether the movements of the heavens are regulated so precisely? Let God leave all this and think a little more of us. The earth is devastated by the injustice and malignity of its inhabitants. Why does not God cause Himself to be feared? It seems that He does not interfere with the details of our affairs. The simplicity and generality of His ways has suggested this thought to my mind.

THEODORE. I understand you, Aristes. You are acting the part of those who will have no Providence, and who imagine that upon this earth it is chance which makes and regulates all things. And I understand that in this way you want to dispute the generality and uniformity of God's action in the government of the world, because this action does not accommodate itself to our needs or inclinations. But pray observe that I am arguing from admitted facts and from the idea of the infinitely perfect Being; for after all the sun rises indifferently upon the just and the unjust, it sometimes scorches the fields of good people whilst it renders fertile those of the unbelievers. Men, in a word, are not wretched in proportion to their guilt; and this fact it is which we have to reconcile with a Providence worthy of the infinitely perfect Being.

Hailstones, Aristes, lay waste the harvests of a good man. Either this sad effect is due to natural consequences of general laws, or God produces it by a particular providence. If God produces this effect by a particular providence, then, so far from providing for all, He positively wills and brings it about that the best men of the country lack bread. It will,

therefore, be better to maintain that the sad effect is a natural result of general laws. And this, too, is what is commonly meant when it is said that God has permitted such-and-such a misfortune. Again, you agree that to govern the world by means of general laws is a procedure beautiful and great and worthy of the divine attributes. You maintain only that it does not sufficiently bear the character of His paternal goodness towards the good, and of the severity of His justice towards the wicked. You do not take note of the misery of the good and the prosperity of the infidels; for, things being as we see they are, I submit that a particular providence would not bear at all the character of His goodness and justice, since very often the just are overwhelmed with misfortune, while the wicked are loaded with favours. But granting that God's action must bear the character of His wisdom as well as of His goodness and justice, I do not find, though at present misfortune and fortune are not in proportion to deserts, any hardness in His general providence. For, in the first place, I submit that, out of an infinity of possible combinations of causes with their effects, God chose that which harmonised in the most beneficial manner the physical with the moral, and that the hailstorm which it was foreseen would fall upon the land of a good man was not one of God's motives in making His choice, but rather the hailstorm which He foresaw would fall upon the land of a wicked man. I say one of the *motives*. Notice the significence of this term; for if God afflicts the just, it is because He wishes to test them and make them deserve His reward; therein lies His real motive. I maintain, in the second place, that all men being sinners, no one deserves that God should abandon the simplicity and generality of His ways in order to apportion good and harm to merits and demerits; that sooner or later God will deal with each according to his deeds, at least on the day when He will come to judge the living and the dead, and when to punish them He will establish general laws which will endure for all eternity.

XII. Nevertheless, Aristes, do not imagine me to hold that God never acts by means of particular volitions, and that all that He does now is to follow the natural laws, which He has laid down once and for all. I hold merely that God never departs from the simplicity of His ways and the uniformity

of His procedure without important reasons. For, the more general His providence is, the more it bears the character of His attributes.

ARISTES. But when does He have these important reasons? Perhaps He never has them.

THEODORE. God has these important reasons, when the glory which He can derive from the perfection of His work counterbalances that which He would receive from the uniformity of His action. He has these important reasons when what He owes to His immutability is of equal weight with, or of less weight than, what He owes to another of His attributes. In a word, He has these reasons when, in departing from the general laws which He has laid down, He is acting as much or more in accordance with what He is than in following them; for God always acts in accordance with what He is. Inevitably He follows the immutable order of His own perfections, because it is in His own substance that He finds His law and because He cannot but do justice to Himself and act for the sake of His glory in the sense which I explained the other day.[1] If you ask me when it happens that God in departing from general laws acts as much or more in accordance with what He is than in following them, my reply is that I do not know. But I know quite well that this happens sometimes. I know it, I say, because my faith teaches me that it is so; for reason, which shows me that this is possible, does not give me any assurance that it actually happens.

ARISTES. I see what you mean, Theodore, and I know of nothing more in conformity with reason and even with experience; for really we see quite distinctly from all the effects which are known to us that they have their natural causes, and that, therefore, God governs the world in accordance with the general laws which He has established for this purpose.

XIII. THEOTIMUS. This is true, but nevertheless Scripture is full of miracles which God performed for the Jewish people; and I do not think that He neglects His Church so much as not to depart in its favour from the generality of His procedure.

THEODORE. Assuredly, Theotimus, God performs infinitely more miracles for His Church than for the synagogue. The Jewish people were accustomed to see what are called miracles. A pro-

[1] Dialogue IX.

digious quantity of them was necessary, since the abundance of their land and the prosperity of their arms were connected with their care in observing the commandments of the law; for it is not likely that the physical and the moral could be harmonised so exactly that Judea should always be fertile in proportion as its inhabitants were good. Thus, we get an infinity of miracles among the Jews.[1] But I believe that many more miracles take place amongst us, not in order to apportion temporal good and evil to our deeds, but in order to freely distribute the true goods or the aid necessary in their acquisition; this is accomplished, nevertheless, without God departing every moment from the generality of His procedure. It is necessary that I should explain this to you, for it is assuredly what is most wonderful in Providence.

XIV. Man, being a complex of mind and body, stands in need of two kinds of goods, those of the mind and those of the body. God had provided these goods in abundance through the establishment of general laws of which up to now I have been speaking. For not only was the first man placed in a terrestrial paradise where he found fruit in abundance, and one among others which was capable of rendering him immortal, but his body was so well shaped and so submissive to his mind, that in consequence of the general laws he could enjoy all those goods without deviating from the true good. In another way he was united to the universal Reason; and his attention, over which he was absolute master, was the occasional or natural cause of his knowledge. Never did his feelings or sensations confuse his ideas against his will; for he was exempt from that craving which incessantly tempts the mind to renounce reason and follow the passions. He was, then, well provided for, both so far as the mind and the body were concerned; for he knew the true good already and could not lose it. He felt the goods of the body and was able to enjoy them; all this in consequence of the general laws of the union of the soul on the one hand with the body, and on the other with the universal Reason; and these two unions were not in conflict with one another, the body being in submission to the mind.

But man having fallen, he found himself all of a sudden badly

[1] By *miracles* I understand effects depending upon general laws which are not naturally known to us. Cf. the second letter of my *Réponse au Vol. I. des Réflexions philosophiques et théologiques de M. Arnauld.*

provided with these two kinds of goods; for as the order, which God follows inviolably, does not permit that for the benefit of a rebel there should be exceptions every moment to the general laws of the communications of movements, it was a necessity that the influence of objects should be communicated to the principal part of the brain, and that the soul should be affected by it, in consequence of the laws of the conjunction of soul and body. Now the mind, disturbed despite itself by hunger, thirst, fatigue, pain, or a thousand other feelings, can neither love nor seek as is befitting after the true goods; and, instead of peacefully enjoying the goods of the body, the least want makes it unhappy. It results from this that man rebels against God; having lost the authority which he had over his body, he finds himself, through the loss of this power alone, deprived of all the goods with which Providence had provided him. Let us now see how God is going to save him from this unfortunate state of things without doing anything contrary to His justice, and without changing the general laws which He has established.

XV. Before the Fall man submitted and had to submit to God alone; for naturally the angels had no authority over spirits who were their equals; they had power only over bodies, or inferior substances. Now, as Adam was master of whatever took place in the principal part of his brain, the demons, even if they could disturb the economy of his body by means of the influence of objects or otherwise, would not have been able to disturb him or render him unhappy. But having lost nearly all the power which he had over his body—for so much was left to him as was necessary for the preservation of the human race, which God did not desire to destroy because of the Redeemer,—man found himself necessarily subjected to angels, who can now disturb and tempt him by making traces in his body adapted to excite in his mind grievous thoughts. Seeing that man was sinning, so to speak, at the direction of the Devil and was surrounded by an infinity of creatures who could cause his death, deprived as he was of all help, God put him under the guidance of the angels, him and his whole posterity, and mainly the nation out of which the Messiah was to be born. Thus, you see that God distributes temporal goods among men despite their being sinners, not by a blind providence but by the action of an intelligent nature. As for the goods of the spirit, or that inner

grace which counter-balances the efforts of passion, and which delivers us from the captivity of the Fall, you know that God gives them to us through the sovereign priest of the true good, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Assuredly, Aristes, this action of God is worthy of admiration. Through sin man became the slave of the Devil, the most evil of creatures, and dependent upon the body, the vilest of substances. God subjected him to the angels both for the sake of justice and out of kindness. In so doing He protected us against the Devil and shared out temporal good and evil according to our deeds, as they were good or evil. But observe, He changed nothing in the general laws of motion nor even in the laws of the conjunction of the soul with the body, or with the universal Reason; for, after all, in the supreme power which God gave to Jesus Christ as man, extending generally over all things, and in the power which the angels have over all that concerns temporal good or evil, God did not in the very least depart from the simplicity of His ways and the generality of His providence, because He only communicated His power to His creatures through the establishment of certain general laws. Follow me, I beg of you.

XVI. The power which the angels possess extends only over bodies; for if they act upon our minds it is because of the conjunction of soul and body. Now, nothing takes place in the body except by movement, and there is a contradiction in supposing that the angels could produce movement as real causes.[1] Therefore, the power of the angels over bodies, and consequently over us, is due to nothing but a general law which God has laid down for Himself to move bodies at the will of the angels. Accordingly, God does not depart from the generality of His providence when He makes use of the agency of the angels in governing the nations, since the angels act only by the efficacy and in consequence of a general law.

Similar remarks apply to Jesus Christ as man, as Head of the Church, as Supreme Priest of the true good. His power is infinitely greater than that of the angels. It extends over all, even over hearts and minds. But it is through His intercession that our Mediator exercises His power: "Semper vivens ad interpellandum pro nobis"[2] ("seeing He ever liveth

[1] Dialogue VII, 6 *sqq.*

[2] Heb. vii. 25.

to make intercession for us"), by desires, namely, which are always efficacious because they are always heard: "Ego autem sciebam quia semper me audis" [1] ("and I knew that Thou hearest me always"). In truth, it is not by a moral intercession resembling that of a man who intercedes for another, but by an intercession which is powerful and never failing in virtue of the general law which God has laid down never to refuse anything to His Son; by an intercession resembling that of the practical desires which we have to move our arm, to walk, to speak. For all the desires of men are powerless in themselves, they are efficacious only through the divine power; they do not act independently; they are, at bottom, merely prayers. But as God is immutable in His action, and as He follows strictly the laws which He has laid down, we have the power to move our arm, and the Head of the Church has the power to sanctify it, because, for our good, God has laid down the laws of the conjunction of soul and body, and because He has promised His Son to hearken to all His desires, according to the utterance of Jesus Christ Himself: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth;" [2] and to what was said by His Father after His resurrection: "Ask of me, and I will give thee the uttermost part of the earth for thy possession." [3]

XVII. ARISTES. I am convinced, Theodore, that creatures have no power of their own, and that God only communicates His power to them through the establishment of some general laws. I have the power to move my arm; but I have it in consequence of the general laws of the conjunction of soul and body, and because God, being immutable, is constant in His decrees. God gave to the guiding angel of the Jewish people the power to punish and reward that people because He desired that the volitions of the angel should be followed by their effects. I agree, but it is God Himself who issued commands to this agent as to all that he should do. God gave supreme power to Jesus Christ, but He prescribed to Him all that He should do. It is not God who obeys the angels; it is the angels who obey God. And Jesus Christ teaches us that He told us nothing on His own account, and that His Father had indicated to Him everything that He should tell us. Jesus Christ interceded, but it was for those whom His Father had placed among the elect.

[1] John, xi. 42. [2] Matt. xxviii. 18. [3] Ps. ii. 8.

He disposes of everything in His Father's house, but He does not dispose of anything of His chief. Thus, God does depart from the generality of His providence; for, though He executes the will of Jesus Christ and of the angels in consequence of general laws, He gives rise to those volitions in them by means of particular inspirations. For this there is no general law.

THEODORE. Are you so sure of it, Aristes? Assuredly, if God commands, in particular fashion, the saintly soul of the Saviour and the angels to form all the desires which they have in relation to us, God departs in doing so from the generality of His providence.[1] But do you think that the guiding angel of the Jewish people had need of much light in order to govern that people, and that the true Solomon had to be united in a particular manner to the eternal Wisdom in order to succeed in the construction of His great work?

ARISTES. Yes, certainly.

THEODORE. Why, the most stupid and least enlightened could succeed just as well as the wisest of men, if everything that he has to do, and the way in which it ought to be done, is indicated to him, especially if all that he has to do is to form certain desires under certain circumstances. Now, according to you neither the guiding angel of this people nor Jesus Christ Himself desired anything but what was already ordained by His Father in detail. I do not, then, see that for such work He needed an extraordinary wisdom. But now tell me, pray, in what this supreme power which Jesus Christ received consisted.

ARISTES. It consisted in the fact that all His prayers were hearkened unto.

THEODORE. But, Aristes, if Jesus Christ can desire nothing except by the express command of His Father, if His desires are not in His power, how can He be capable of receiving any real power? You have the power to move your arm; but that is because it depends upon you whether you shall move it or not. Cease to be the master of your will, and forthwith you lose all your power. Is not this evident? Be careful, then, not to insult the wisdom of the Saviour and not to deprive Him of His power. Do not take away from Him the glory which He ought to derive from the part which He plays in the construc-

[1] This is explained at great length in my *Réponses à M. Arnauld*, chiefly in the *Réponse à la Dissertation* and in my first *Lettre* regarding Vol. III. of his *Réflexions*.

tion of the eternal temple. If He has nothing to do but to form impotent desires enjoined upon Him by particular commands, His work could not, it seems to me, do Him much honour.

XVIII. ARISTES. No, Theodore; but then God derives from it all the more glory.

THEODORE. If that be so, you are right; for God ought to derive more glory from the magnificence of the eternal temple than the wise Solomon who constructed it. But let us see. Let us compare with one another the two principal modes of God's providence, in order to ascertain which is the more worthy of the divine attributes. According to the first, God forms once and for all a certain design, independently of the means of its realisation. He chooses the architect and endows him with wisdom and intelligence. In addition, He indicates to him all the desires which he ought to have, and all the circumstances under which he ought to have them. And, finally, He Himself carries into effect in a very exact manner all the desires which He had ordered should arise. This is the idea which you have of God's action, since you want Him to give rise by the help of particular volitions to all the desires of the saintly soul of Jesus Christ. And this is the idea which I have of it.[1] I believe that God, through His infinite foresight, having foreseen all the consequences of all the possible laws which He could establish, has united His Word to such a human nature and under such circumstances that the work which was to follow from this union should do Him more honour than any other work produced in any other way. Furthermore, God having foreseen that acting in the saintly manhood of our Mediator in very simple and very general ways,—I mean in ways most worthy of the divine attributes,—this soul of Jesus Christ would use its power in such a way, and with perfect liberty would form a series of desires of such a character that these desires having been granted, and on account of His sacrifice deserving to be granted, the future Church which was to result from those desires would be greater and more perfect than it would have been had He chosen any other nature under any other circumstances.

Compare then, I pray you, the idea which you have of Providence with my idea of it. Which of the two shows more wisdom and foresight? Mine bears the character of the most

[1] Dialogue X.

inscrutable quality of the Divinity which is to foresee the free acts of a creature under all sorts of circumstances. According to my idea, God makes use just as readily of free causes as of necessary ones in the realisation of His designs. According to my idea, God does not form His wise designs blindly. Before forming them, humanly speaking, He compares all the possible works with all the possible means necessary for their realisation. According to my idea, God must derive an infinite glory from the wisdom of His procedure; but His glory does not in any way diminish that of the free causes to whom He has communicated His power without depriving them of their liberty. God gives them a share in the glory of His work and of theirs, by allowing them to act freely according to their nature, and in doing so He increases His own glory. For it is infinitely more difficult to realise His designs with certainty by means of free causes than by means of necessary or necessitated causes, or causes which are insuperably determined by express commands and invincible impressions.

ARISTES. I agree, Theodore, that there is more of wisdom, and that God derives more glory, as does also the saintly manhood of our Mediator, according to this idea of Providence than according to any other.

THEODORE. You might add that according to this idea one can comprehend that Jesus Christ did not receive supreme power over all nations to no purpose, and why it was necessary to unite His saintly manhood with the eternal Wisdom in order that He might execute His work successfully. But it is sufficient that you should agree that one of these two modes of providence is wiser than the other; for one must be quite an infidel to attribute to God the one that seems to be the less worthy of His attributes.

XIX. ARISTES. I surrender, Theodore. But pray explain to me how it is that Jesus Christ Himself says that He is faithfully executing the will of His Father. "For I do always those things that are pleasing to Him," He says;[1] and in another place, "For I spake not from Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He hath given Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life eternal; the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father

[1] John viii. 29.

hath said unto me, so I speak."[1] How can you reconcile these passages, and a number of other similar passages, with the opinion that God does not give rise to all the desires of the human will of Jesus Christ by means of particular volitions? This troubles me to some extent.

THEODORE. I confess, Aristes, I do not understand how these passages can cause you any difficulty. Do you not know then that the Divine Word, in which the saintly humanity of Jesus Christ subsists, is the living law of the eternal Father; and that it is contradictory to imagine that the human will of Jesus ever departs from this law? Tell me, pray, are you not certain, whenever you give alms, that you are doing the will of God? And if you were well assured that you had never done any but good deeds, could you not say without fear: "I do always those things that please Him"?

ARISTES. Quite so, but there would still be a great deal of difference.

THEODORE. A very great difference, certainly; for how do we know that we are doing the will of God when we give alms? Perhaps because we have read in the written law that God commands us to help the afflicted, or because, entering into ourselves in order to consult the divine law, we have discovered in that eternal code, as St. Augustine calls it, that such is the will of the infinitely perfect Being. Know then, Aristes, that the divine Word is the law of God Himself, and the inviolable rule of His will, and that it is in it that the divine commandments are to be found. "In Verbo unigenito Patris est omne mandatum,"[2] says St. Augustine. Know that all minds, some more than others, are free to consult this law; know that their attention is the occasional cause which renders explicable to them all its commandments, in consequence of the general laws of their union with the infinite Reason; know that one cannot do anything which is not acceptable to God if one follows strictly what is written therein; know, above all, that the saintly humanity of the Saviour is more closely united with the law than the most enlightened of intelligent minds, and that it is through it that God has willed that obscurities should be cleared up. But

[1] John xiii. 49, 50.

[2] Confess. xii. ch. 15. "Mandatum Patris est Filius. Quomodo enim non est mandatum Patris, quod est Verbum Patris?" (Aug. Serm. 140, De Verbis Evang., n. 6).

note that He has not deprived Jesus Christ of His liberty or of the power of controlling that attention which is the occasional cause of all our knowledge. For, assuredly, the saintly soul of Jesus Christ, though under the direction of the Word, has the power of thinking whatever it pleases in order to accomplish the work for which it has been chosen by God, since God, in His character of scrutiniser of hearts, makes use of free causes just as readily as of necessary ones for the realisation of His designs.[1]

XX. Nevertheless, Aristes, do not think that God never departs from the generality of His procedure in regard to the humanity of Jesus Christ, and that He only forms the desires of that saintly soul in consequence of the general laws of the union which it has with the Word. Whenever God foresees that our Mediator, out of an infinity of good deeds which He discovers in the Word as a result of His attention, ought to choose that the consequences of which will be the best possible, then God, who never departs from the simplicity of His ways without reason, does not determine Him by means of a particular volition to do what He foresees He will do adequately by the use of His liberty in consequence of general laws. But when the saintly soul of the Saviour, in consequence of infinite and infinitely infinite comparisons of the combinations of all the effects which result or will result from His desires, can choose out of several good deeds—for He can only do good deeds—those which appear the best and the consequences of which nevertheless would not be so advantageous to His work, then, if God derives more glory from the beauty of His work than from the simplicity of His ways, He departs from this simplicity and acts in a particular and extraordinary manner in the humanity of the Saviour, so that the latter may will precisely that which will honour Him most. But though He acts in the humanity of Jesus Christ in this way, I believe that He never determines Him by means of invincible impressions of feeling, be they ever so infallible, in order that He may also have the greatest share possible in the glory of His work; for that action which does honour to the liberty and the power of Jesus Christ is even more glorious to God than any

[1] See the first *Lettre à M. Arnauld* and the *Réponse* to his *Dissertation* and the first *Lettre* written in reply to his.

other, since it expresses His character of searching all hearts, and bears eloquent witness to the fact that He knows how to make use of free causes just as readily as of necessary ones in the realisation of His designs.

ARISTES. I understand your contention perfectly. You think that God never departs without the best of reasons from the simplicity and generality of His ways; so that His providence does not resemble that of finite intelligences. You think that His foresight is the basis of the predestination of Jesus Christ Himself, and that, if He united His word to such a nature and under such circumstances, it is because He foresaw that the work which would result from this predestination, which is the cause and foundation of the predestination of all the elect in consequence of the general laws which make up the order of grace, would be the most beautiful that could be produced by the most divine means. You think that the work and the means jointly are together more worthy of God than any other work produced in any other way.

XXI. THEODORE. Yes, Aristes, I think so because of the principle that God can act only for His own sake, only for the sake of the love which He bears to Himself, only by means of His will, which is not, as it is in our case, an impression coming from elsewhere and leading Him elsewhere—in a word, only for the sake of His glory, only in order to express the divine perfections which He loves with an unconquerable love, in the possession of which He glories and in which He delights by the necessity of His being. He wishes His work to bear in its beauty, and through its magnificence, the character of His excellence and His greatness, and His ways not to belie His infinite wisdom and immutability. If there are defects in His work, monstrosities among bodies and an infinity of sinners and damned ones, it is so because there can be no defects in His procedure, because He cannot form any designs independently of the means of their realisation. He has done for the beauty of the universe and the safety of men all that He could do, not absolutely, but acting as He ought to act, acting for the sake of His glory in accordance with all that He is; He loves all things in proportion as they are worthy of love; He desires the beauty of His work, the salvation of all men, the conversion of all sinners; but still more He loves His wisdom, He

loves it with an unconquerable love, He follows it inviolably. The immutable order of His divine perfections it is, wherein consists His law and the rule of His action, a law which does not forbid Him to love us and to desire that all creatures should be just, saintly, happy and perfect; but a law which does not permit Him to depart at any moment, for the sake of sinners, from the generality of His ways. His providence bears ample testimony to His goodness towards men. Let us submit to it, let us rejoice in the fact that it also expresses His other attributes.

THEOTIMUS. Well, Aristes, what do you think of the divine Providence?

ARISTES. I adore it and submit to it.

THEODORE. Much discussion will be necessary, Aristes, to cause you to consider all the beauties of this adorable Providence, and to make you notice its principal traits in all that is happening before us day by day. But I have, it seems to me, sufficiently explained the principle; follow it closely, and you will assuredly understand that all those contradictions which induce the enemies of Providence to exult in pitiable triumph are really so many proofs in support of what I have been trying to show you.

THIRTEENTH DIALOGUE

It is not right to criticise the ordinary accounts of Providence—The principal general laws by the aid of which God governs the world—The providence of God in bestowing infallibility upon His Church.

I. ARISTES. Ah, Theodore, how beautiful and noble the idea which you gave me of Providence appears to me, above all, how fruitful and luminous and how well calculated to silence libertines and infidels! Never was there a principle pregnant with more important consequences for religion and morality. This wonderful principle sheds light everywhere, and clears away countless difficulties. All those effects which conflict with one another in the order of nature and of grace do not indicate any contradiction in the cause which governs them; they furnish, on the contrary, so many clear proofs of the uniformity of God's activity. All those ills that we are heir to, all those disorders which overwhelm us, can easily be reconciled with the wisdom, goodness and justice of Him who rules over all. I could wish the wicked to be rooted out from among the good; but in patience I await the consummation of the generations, the day of the harvest, that great day set apart for repaying to each according to his deeds. The work of God must be accomplished in a way which shall bear the character of His attributes. I admire now the majestic course of general Providence.

THEODORE. I can see, Aristes, that you have followed the principle which I laid before you a day or two ago closely and with pleasure, for you seem still to be moved by it. But have you quite grasped it, have you quite mastered it? Of this I am still in doubt, for it is very difficult for you in so short a time to have meditated upon it sufficiently to be fully in possession of it. Acquaint us, I beg of you, with some of your reflections on the subject, in order to clear up my doubt and put me at rest; for the more useful, the more fruitful

principles may be, the greater is the danger of not understanding them thoroughly.

II. ARISTES. I admit it, Theodore; but what you have said is so clear, and your mode of explaining Providence harmonises so completely with the idea of the infinitely perfect Being, and with all that we see taking place before our eyes, that I am quite persuaded that it is the true mode of explanation. How glad I am to see myself delivered from the error into which most men, and even philosophers, fall! As soon as a misfortune befalls a wicked man, or one who is known to be such, everyone judges at once of God's designs, and concludes boldly that God willed to punish him. But if it happens—and it happens but too often—that a knave or scoundrel succeeds in his undertakings, or that a good man succumbs under the calumny of his enemies, does it follow that God wills to punish the one and reward the other? Not at all Some say that God wills to put the virtues of the good man to the test; others say that it is a misfortune which He has merely permitted, but has not deliberately caused to happen. I think that those people who glory in hating and despising the poor, on the ground that God Himself hates and despises the wretched, seeing that He leaves them in their wretchedness, reason more consistently. How can we judge of God's designs? Ought we not to realise that we know nothing of them, since we contradict ourselves at every moment?

THEODORE. Is this the way, Aristes, in which you understand my principles, and this the use which you make of them? I think that those whom you condemn are more in the right than you are.

ARISTES. How so, Theodore? I think you must be joking, or amusing yourself in contradicting me.

THEODORE. Not at all.

ARISTES. Really! Do you then approve of the impertinences of those impassioned historians who, after relating the death of a Prince, judge of God's designs with regard to him according to their feelings and the interests of their nation? Either the Spanish or the French writers, or perhaps both, must be wrong in their descriptions of the death of Philip II. Must not kings die just as we do?

THEODORE. These historians are wrong, but you are not right. We must not conclude that God willed to do injury

to a Prince who is our enemy, and whom we hate; that is true, but we can and must believe that He will punish the wicked and reward the good. Those who judge of God in accordance with the idea they have of the strict justice of the infinitely perfect Being, judge rightly of Him; and those who attribute to Him designs which favour their disorderly inclinations, judge wrongly of Him.

III. ARISTES. That is true; but it is one of the consequences of the natural laws that a certain person should be crushed under the ruins of his house, and that the best of men would not have escaped.

THEODORE. Who doubts this? But have you not forgotten that it is God who has established those laws? The erroneous idea of an imaginary "nature" still lingers in your mind, and prevents you from understanding thoroughly the principle which I have explained to you. Be careful, therefore. Since it is God who established natural laws, He had to combine the physical with the moral in such a way that the consequences of such laws should be the best possible, I mean the most worthy of His justice and goodness, as well as of all His other attributes. Thus one is right in saying that the terrible death of a brute or infidel is an effect of the divine vengeance, for though the death is only the result of the natural laws which God has established, yet He only established them for the purpose of such effects; but if any misfortune befalls a good man when he is about to do a good deed, we must not say that God willed to punish him, because God did not establish general laws for the purpose of such effects. We must say that God has permitted this evil because it is a natural consequence of those laws which He has established for the sake of the best effects; or because He meant to test this good man and make him deserve his recompense; for among the motives which God had for combining in a certain way the physical with the moral, we must assuredly reckon the great benefits which He foresaw we should derive from our present wretchedness.

Thus men are right in attributing to the justice of God the evils which befall the wicked. But I believe they err in two ways. Firstly, because they arrive at these conclusions only in the case of extraordinary punishments which strike the mind; for if a scoundrel dies of fever, they do not usually think that

this was a punishment from God; to make them think that, he must die from a lightning stroke, or at the hands of the hangman. Secondly, because they imagine that such remarkable punishments are the effects of a particular volition on the part of God. This is a false view, which, taking away from divine Providence its simplicity and generality, deprives it of the character of infinite foresight and immutability; for, assuredly, infinitely more wisdom is necessary for combining the physical with the moral in a way which should involve the just punishment of certain people for their acts of violence, as a consequence of the interconnection of causes, than for punishing them by means of a peculiar and miraculous Providence.

ARISTES. That is the way in which I conceive the matter. But what you are saying does not justify the temerity of those who boldly judge of God's designs in all that happens before their eyes.

IV. THEODORE. I do not maintain any more than you that they are always right. I only say that they are right when their judgments are free from passion and self-interest, and when they take as their basis the idea which we all have of the infinitely perfect Being. Neither do I maintain that they do well in saying too positively that God had such and such a design. For example, it seems to me certain that one of the motives for the establishment of general laws was the affliction of such and such a good man, if God foresaw that this would be a greater occasion of merit to him. Thus, God willed this affliction, which to us, who do not foresee its consequences, does not seem to harmonise with His goodness. Those who conclude that God has merely *permitted* this misfortune to occur are mistaken. But what would you have, Aristes? It is better to leave to men, biassed as they are in favour of their imaginary "nature," the liberty of judging too positively of the designs of God than to argue with them concerning the effects which appear to contradict the divine attributes. What does it matter if minds fall into contradiction and are involved in difficulties because of their false ideas, providing that at bottom they are not mistaken in essential matters? Provided men do not impute to God designs which are contrary to His attributes, and do not make Him act to suit their passions, I believe they must be listened to in peace. Instead of burdening them with contradictions, which according to their

principles are inexplicable, charity demands from us that we should accept what they say in order to confirm them in the ideas which they have of Providence, seeing that they are not in a position to have better ones; for it is even preferable to attribute to God a human providence than to believe that everything happens by chance. Moreover, at bottom they are right. A certain infidel dies. It may be boldly said that God has designed his punishment. One would be still more in the right if one said that God willed to prevent him from corrupting others, because in truth God always wills, by means of the general laws which He has established, to do all the good that it is possible to do. A certain good man dies before his time while on his way to help a poor man; in such a case one need not hesitate to conclude, even if he had been struck by lightning, that God willed to recompense him. What Scripture says of Enoch may be said of him: "Raptus est ne malitia mutaret intellectum ejus, aut ne fictio deciperet animam illius." Death removed him, lest the age should corrupt his mind and heart. All these opinions are in conformity with the idea which we have of the justice and goodness of God, and in harmony with the designs which He had when He laid down general laws for the regulation of the ordinary course of His Providence. Not that one is not often mistaken in these opinions; for to all appearances such and such a good man who died young would have won greater merits and converted more sinners if he had lived longer in the circumstances under which he would have been placed in consequence of the general laws of nature and of grace. But opinions of this sort, though somewhat risky and bold, do not produce bad effects; and those who entertain them do not want us so much to believe them to be true as to adore the wisdom and goodness of God in the government of the world.

ARISTES. I follow you, Theodore. It is better for men to speak ill of Providence than not to speak of it at all.

THEODORE. No, Aristes. But it is better for men to speak often of Providence according to their poor ideas than never to speak of it at all. It is better for men to speak of it in human fashion than never to say anything of it. We ought never to speak ill either of God or of His Providence. That is true; but we are permitted to stutter out something with regard to these exalted matters, provided we do so in accordance with what we are taught by faith. For God is pleased with the efforts which

we make to relate His marvels. Believe me, Aristes, one can hardly commit a greater wrong in speaking of Providence than in not speaking of it at all.

THEOTIMUS. Would you, Aristes, wish philosophers alone to speak of Providence and, of philosophers, only those who have the idea of it which you have at present?

V. ARISTES. I should wish men, Theotimus, never to speak of Providence in a way which is calculated to make simple-minded people believe that the wicked must succeed in their undertakings; for the prosperity of infidels is so well established a fact that it can, and often does, sow distrust in the minds of men. If temporal good and evil were pretty well regulated in accordance with merit and faith in God, the way in which Providence is usually spoken of would not have any bad results. But note, most men, and those above all who have the most piety, fall into great misfortunes, because, instead of making use in their need of the certain measures furnished to them by general Providence, they tempt God in the deceptive hope of a particular providence. If they have a lawsuit, for example, they neglect to prepare the necessary papers in order to instruct the judges on the justice of their cause. If they have enemies or if there are envious people who prepare an ambush for them, instead of watching them so as to discover their designs, they expect that God will not fail to protect them. Women who have a cross husband, instead of winning him over by patience and humility, go to complain of him to all sorts of good people of their acquaintance, and to commend him to their prayers. One does not always obtain in this way what one desires and hopes for; and in that case one does not fail to grumble about Providence and to entertain opinions which violate the divine perfections. You are aware, Theotimus, of the sad effects which a Providence wrongly understood produces in the minds of simple people, and that it is mainly to this that superstition owes its origin,—superstition which causes an infinite number of evils in the world.

THEOTIMUS. I grant you, Aristes, that it would be desirable that all men should have a just idea of divine Providence. But I agree with Theodore, and submit that this not being possible, it is better for them to speak of it as they do than not to speak of it at all. The idea which they have of it, false

though it be, and even the natural inclination which leads minds to superstition, is very advantageous to them in the state they are in, for it prevents them from falling into a thousand errors. When you have thought this matter over, I believe you will agree. A certain person loses his lawsuit because he neglected the natural means which were requisite. What does it matter, Aristes? The loss of his property will prove, perhaps, to be the cause of his salvation. Assuredly, if it is not laziness and negligence which have caused him to neglect all this, but a holy impulse of faith in God and the fear of meddling with the quibbles of law and of losing his time to no purpose, if that is so, he has gained his lawsuit before God, though he may perchance have lost it before men; for he will gain more profit from a suit lost in this way than from another won with expenses, damages, and interest.

VI. We are Christians, Aristes; we are entitled to the true goods; Heaven is open, and Jesus Christ, our precursor and chief, has already entered it for us. Accordingly, God no longer rewards our faith in Him, as was His wont formerly, by an abundance of temporal goods; He has better rewards for His adopted children in Jesus Christ. That time has passed away together with the law. The ancient covenant symbolical of the new is now abrogated. If we were Jews, I mean carnal Jews, we should have here below a recompense in proportion to our deserts; I say carnal, for the Christian Jews had a share in the cross of Jesus Christ before sharing in His glory. But we have a hope better than theirs, a better and an enduring possession[1] founded on a better covenant and better victims: "By so much hath Jesus become the surety of a better covenant. . . . With better sacrifices than these."[2] The prosperity of the wicked should not surprise us more than the Jewish Christians, than the Mahometans, than those who do not know the difference there is between the two covenants, between the Grace of the Old Testament and that of the New, between the temporal goods which God bestowed upon the Jews through the agency of the angels and the true goods which God gives to His children through our chief and Mediator Jesus Christ. It is believed that men ought to be wretched in proportion to their wickedness. It is true;

[1] Heb. x. 34. [2] Heb. vii. 22, ix. 23.

and at bottom we are not mistaken in believing this, for sooner or later it will come to pass. There is not a Christian who does not know that the day will come when God will render to each according to his deeds. The prosperity of the wicked can therefore disturb only those who are lacking in faith, and who recognise no other goods than those of this life. Thus, Aristes, the confused and imperfect idea which most men have of Providence does not produce so many bad results as you think in true Christians, though it may disturb the minds of and render extremely anxious the majority of men, who often notice that it is not in accord with experience. But it is better that they should have this idea of Providence than that they should have no idea of it at all, which by degrees would come to be the case if they allowed it to be blotted out from their minds through a pernicious silence.

ARISTES. I admit, Theotimus, that faith often precludes us from drawing impious conclusions from the prosperity of the wicked and the sufferings of the good. But as faith is not so palpable as the continuous experience of sad events, it does not always prevent the mind from being disturbed and from mistrusting Providence. Moreover, Christians hardly ever follow the principles of their religion; they speak of good and evil as the carnal Jews do. When a father exhorts his son to follow virtue, he is not afraid of saying to him that if he is a good man all his undertakings will be successful. Do you think that his son then thinks of the true goods? Alas! perhaps the father never thinks of them himself. Meanwhile, the infidels, who carefully notice the contradictions of all these harangues, which are made without any reflection on the ways of Providence, do not fail to extract from them proofs of their infidelity, and these proofs are so readily grasped, so palpable, that merely to put them forward is enough to disturb good people and to cause the downfall of those who are not upheld by faith. "Suppose ye," said Jesus Christ, "that these eighteen persons who were crushed under the tower of Siloam were more criminal, more beholden to the justice of God, than the other inhabitants of Jerusalem? Nay, I tell you, but you shall all perish unless you repent."[1] This is how one ought to speak to men in order to teach them that in this life the most wretched are not on that account the most criminal, and that those who live in abundance, in

[1] Luke xiii. 4, 5.

the midst of pleasures and honours, are not on that account more cherished by God or protected by a more particular Providence.

VII. THEOTIMUS. Yes, Aristes; but everybody is not always in a position to realise this truth. *Durus est hic sermo.* The carnal people, those who as yet share the opinions of the Jews, do not comprehend it at all. It is necessary to speak to men according to their light or capacity, and to adapt oneself to their weakness in order gradually to win them over. It is necessary carefully to preserve in their minds the idea of Providence which they are capable of having. It is necessary to promise them a hundredfold, that they should understand it as they can, according to the dispositions of their heart. Carnal people will, it is true, understand it wrongly; but it is better that they should believe that virtue is badly rewarded than that it will not be rewarded at all. Indeed, according to their false ideas, it will be rewarded perfectly well. Some libertine will point out to them that false promises are being held out to them. Granted, but perhaps this will help in making them understand that they are mistaken, and that the good things which they value so highly are of little importance, since God distributes them in a manner so little to their liking, so far from falling in with their prejudices. Assuredly, Aristes, one can hardly speak too much of Providence, even if one were to know nothing of it; for it always calls up in the mind the idea that there is a God who rewards and punishes. A confused idea of Providence is as useful as the idea you have of it, in making most men incline to virtue. It cannot remove the difficulties of infidels; it cannot be defended without leading to an infinite number of contradictions. That is true. But, then, this would hardly trouble simple people. Faith sustains them, and their humility and simplicity give them sufficient protection from the attacks of the infidels. I believe, therefore, that in our sermons to ordinary people we ought to speak of Providence according to the most common idea; and that that which Theodore has taught us should be kept in reserve to silence the would-be clever people, and to reassure those who are troubled by consideration of the effects which seem to contradict the divine perfections; assuming also in their case that they are capable of the attention which is necessary for the understanding of our principles, since otherwise the

shortest way would be, if they are Christians, to curb them by the authority of Scripture alone.

ARISTES. I yield, Theotimus. Men must be spoken to according to their light when they are not in a position to go deeply into things. If we were to criticise the confused ideas which they have of Providence, we should perhaps be the cause of their downfall. It would be easy to embarrass them with the difficulties which they meet. But it would be very difficult to save them from their embarrassment, since too much application is needed for a recognition and understanding of the true principles of Providence. I see all this, Theotimus, and I think that it is mainly because of this that Jesus Christ and the Apostles did not formally teach us the rational grounds of which the theologians avail themselves in supporting the truths of faith. They assumed that enlightened people would know those principles, and that simple-minded people who submit entirely to authority would not need them, and might be disgusted with them and grasp them wrongly through lack of application and intelligence. I am, therefore, quite resolved to leave to men the freedom to speak of Providence in their own way, so long as they do not say anything which is openly in conflict with the divine attributes, so long as they do not assign to God unjust and bizarre designs, and do not make Him act for the purpose of satisfying their unruly inclinations. But as for philosophers, and above all as for would-be clever people, I shall assuredly not tolerate their impertinent raillery. I hope I shall have my turn, and that I shall be able to embarrass them greatly. They have silenced me several times, but I shall soon compel them to be silent; for now I have answers to meet all that was most specious and strong in their objections.

VIII. THEODORE. Beware, Aristes, of allowing vanity and pride to inspire your zeal. Seek no adversaries for the sake of having the glory and the pleasure of defeating them. It is truth which ought to be made to triumph over those who have fought against it. If you set out to confuse them, you will not win them over, and perhaps they will even confuse you; for I grant you have that wherewith you can silence them, but only on the assumption that they are willing to listen to reason, which assuredly they will not do if they feel that you want to gain the day. If they mock you, they will have the mockers on

their side; if they are frightened, they will spread fear in people's minds. You will remain alone with your principles, of which no one will understand anything. I advise you, therefore, Aristes, to take these people whom you have in mind and to lay your opinions before them as though you wanted to learn from them what you ought to think about the matter. In order to answer you, it will become necessary for them to inquire, and perhaps they may become convinced by the evidence. Beware, above all, of making them imagine that you are making game of them. Speak as a genuine inquirer, so that they will not recognise your charitable dissimulation. But when you see that the truth has impressed them, fight for it without any fear of their abandoning it. They will look upon it as a possession which belongs to them, and which they have won by their application and work; they will be interested in its defence, not perhaps because they really love it, but because it will come to be identified with their self-respect. In this manner you will bring them over to the side of truth, and you will establish between it and them links of interest which they will not easily break through. Most men look at truth as a very useless acquisition, or rather as something that is embarrassing and inconvenient. But if it is of their own making, and if they look upon it as a possession of which people want to deprive them, they become attached to it and give it such attentive consideration that they can no longer forget it.

ARISTES. You are right, Theodore. To win people over securely it is necessary to find a way of making amends to their self-respect; herein lies the secret of success. I shall try strictly to follow your friendly advice. But do you think I have sufficiently mastered your principles to be able to convince others of them, and to meet all their difficulties?

THEODORE. If you are determined to adopt the air and manner of a learner in dealing with your people, it is not necessary that you should be versed in these principles more exactly. Your people will teach you them just as well as I.

ARISTES. How, Theodore, can they teach me just as well as you?

THEODORE. Better than I, Aristes; you will see that it is so by experience. Remember only the main truths which I have explained to you, and with which you ought to relate all the questions which you will put to them.

Remember that God can act only in accordance with what He is, only in a way which bears the character of His attributes; that, therefore, He does not form any designs independently of the means of their realisation, but chooses that work and those means which together will express the perfections, in the possession of which He glories, better than any other work produced in any other way. This, Aristes, is the most general and the most fruitful principle.

Remember that the more simplicity, uniformity, and generality there is in Providence, other things remaining the same, the more it bears the character of the Divinity; and that, therefore, God governs the world by means of general laws, in order to make His wisdom shine forth in the interlinking of causes.

Remember also that created things do not act upon one another by their own activity, and that God only communicates His power to them because He has made their modifications into occasional causes, determining the exercise of the general laws which He has prescribed for Himself. Everything depends upon this principle.

IX. The following, Aristes, are the general laws in accordance with which God regulates the ordinary course of His Providence:—

1. The general laws of the communication of motion, of which laws the impact of bodies is the occasional or natural cause. It is by the establishment of these laws that God has communicated to the sun the power to illumine, to fire the power to burn, and so on with regard to the other virtues or powers which bodies have for the purpose of acting upon one another; and it is by obeying His own laws that God produces everything which the secondary causes seem to produce.

2. The laws of the conjunction of soul and body, the modifications of which are reciprocally the occasional causes of the changes that occur in them. It is on account of these laws that I have the power to speak, walk, feel, imagine, and so on, and that objects have, through my sense organs, the power of affecting and influencing me. It is by means of these laws that God unites me to all His works.

3. The laws of the union of the soul with God, with the intelligible substance of the universal Reason, of which laws our attention is the occasional cause. It is because of the

establishment of these laws that the mind has the power to think of whatever it wishes to think, and of discovering the truth. By means of reason and experience we are apprised of these three laws alone. But the authority of Scripture brings to our knowledge two others, viz. :—

4. The general laws which give to good and bad angels power over bodies—substances inferior to their nature.[1] By the exercise of these laws the angels governed the Jewish people, whom they punished and rewarded by means of temporal goods and evils in accordance with the commands they had received from God. By the exercise of these laws devils have still the power to tempt us, and our tutelary angels the power to defend us. The occasional causes of these laws are their practical desires ; for there is a contradiction in supposing that anyone but the Creator of bodies can be their mover.

5. Finally, the laws through which Jesus Christ received supreme power in heaven and earth, not only over bodies, but over minds ; not only to distribute temporal goods, as the angels did to the synagogue, but to diffuse in our hearts the inner grace which makes us children of God, and gives us a right to eternal goods.[2] The occasional causes of these laws are the diverse movements of the saintly soul of Jesus ; for our Mediator and sovereign Priest intercedes for us incessantly, and His intercession is always and very promptly hearkened unto.

These, then, Aristes, are the most general laws of nature and of grace which God follows in the ordinary course of His Providence. By means of these laws He executes His designs in a way which admirably bears the character of His infinite foresight, His character of searching all hearts, His immutability and His other attributes. By means of these laws He communicates His power to His creatures and gives them a share in the glory of the work which He accomplishes through their agency. Indeed, it is through this very communication of His power and glory that He does the greatest honour to His attributes ; for an infinite wisdom is necessary in order to make use thus readily of free causes just as much as of necessary ones in the realisation of His designs.

But though God has prescribed these general laws for Himself,

[1] Cf. the last *Éclaircissement du Traité de la Nature et de la Grâce* and the *Réponse à la Dissertation de M. Arnauld.*

[2] Cf. *Traité de la Nature et de la Grâce, II.*

as well as some others about which there is no need to speak, as for example the laws whereby the fire of Hell has the power to torment evil spirits, the water of baptism the power to purify us, and formerly the bitter waters of jealousy the power to punish the unfaithfulness of women,[1] and several others, though God, I say, has prescribed these laws for Himself, and though He never departs without good reasons from the generality of His procedure, yet remember that when He receives more glory in departing from it than in following it, then He never fails to abandon it; for to reconcile the contradictions which appear in the effects of Providence, it is enough that you should maintain that God usually acts and must act ordinarily in accordance with general laws. Keep, therefore, these principles well in mind, and arrange your questions so as to make the persons whom you wish to convert see them.

ARISTES. I shall do so, Theodore, and I hope I shall succeed in my design; for all these principles seem to me so evident, so well linked with one another, so much in harmony with what we observe in actual experience, that unless prejudice and passion blind people to the impression which they ought to make on their minds, they will find it difficult to resist them. I thank you for the advice you have given me to make amends to their self-respect, for I see quite well that I should spoil everything if I set about it in the way I should have liked to. But, Theodore, assuming that I succeed in my aim and convince them of the truth of our principles, how can I compel them to recognise the authority of the Church? For they are born in heresy, and I should like very much to save them from it.

THEODORE. Truly, Aristes, that is quite another matter. You are perhaps of the opinion that to convert heretics it is enough to give valid proofs of the infallibility of the Church. The intervention of heaven is necessary, Aristes. For the spirit of faction causes so many secret connections in the hearts of those who are unfortunately engaged in disputes as to blind them and close their eyes to the truth. If anyone were to exhort you to become a Huguenot, assuredly you would not listen to him willingly. Know, therefore, that they perhaps are more ardent than we are, because in the position in which they are at present they exhort one another more often than we do to exhibit firmness. Having an infinite number of

[1] Numb. v. 14.

pledges, unions, prejudices, selfish reasons, which keep them in their sect, what skill must be needed in order to make them give unbiassed consideration to the proofs which might be adduced to show them that they are in error!

ARISTES. I know, Theodore, that they are extremely sensitive with regard to their religion, and however gently one attacks them on this point, all their passions are aroused. But do not fear, for, apart from the fact that those of whom I speak are not so sensitive as many others, I shall adopt the air of a submissive learner so well, that in order to answer me they will be compelled to examine the questions which I shall raise. Do but give me some proofs of the infallibility of the Church in conformity with the idea which you have given me of Providence.

X. THEODORE. It is certain from Scripture, which the heretics dare not reject, that "God willeth that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth."[1] It is necessary, therefore, to find in the order of Providence reliable means for making all men arrive at a knowledge of the truth.

ARISTES. I deny this conclusion. God wills that all men should be saved, but He does not will to do all that would be necessary to save them; if He did will it, they would all be saved; the Chinese and so many other people would not be deprived of the knowledge of the true God and of His Son Jesus Christ, in whom there is eternal life.

THEODORE. I am not telling you, Aristes, that God wills to do all that would be necessary to save all mankind; He does not will to perform miracles every moment; He does not will to send victorious grace to all hearts. His action must bear the character of His attributes, and He must not depart without good reasons from the generality of His providence. His wisdom does not permit Him always to apportion His aid in accordance with the present needs of the wicked and the foreseen negligence of the just. All mankind would be saved if He acted in this way towards us. I maintain merely that it is necessary to find in Providence general means to correspond with God's desire that all men should arrive at a knowledge of the truth. Now, this knowledge can be arrived at only in two ways, by investigation or by authority.

ARISTES. I understand you, Theodore. The method of exami-

[1] 1 Tim. ii. 4.

nation, or investigation, answers perhaps to God's desire to save the cultured, but God desires to save the poor, the simple, the ignorant, those who cannot read as well as our learned critics. And yet I do not see that people like Grotius, Coccejus, Saumaise, Buxtovf, have arrived at that knowledge of the truth which it is God's will we should all arrive at. Perhaps Grotius was nearest to it at the moment when death overtook him. But what! Does Providence look after the salvation of those people only who have enough life as well as understanding and knowledge to distinguish truth from error? Assuredly, this is not likely to be the case. The method of investigation is quite insufficient. Now that man's reason has been weakened, it must be guided by authority. The method of authority is palpable, certain, general, and answers perfectly to God's will that all men should attain to the knowledge of truth. But where are we to find this infallible authority, this sure method which we can all follow without fearing any error? The heretics maintain that such authority is to be found only in the sacred writings.

XI. THEODORE. It is to be found in the sacred writings, but it is by the authority of the Church that we know this. St. Augustine was right in saying that without the Church he would not believe in the Gospel. How does it come about that simple people can be certain that the four gospels which we have possess an infallible authority? The ignorant have no proofs to show that the gospels were composed by the authors bearing their names, or that they have not been corrupted in essential points; and I am not aware that scholars have any proofs which are quite certain. But, even if it were certain that the Gospel of St. Matthew, for example, was written by that apostle, and that it is at present precisely as he wrote it, assuredly if we had no infallible authority teaching us that this Evangelist was divinely inspired, we should not be able to rest our faith upon his words as upon the words of God Himself. There are some people who maintain that the divine origin of the sacred writings is so obvious that no one can read them without recognising it. But upon what does this claim rest? Other grounds than mere guesses and prejudices are necessary in order to attribute infallibility to them. It is necessary either that the Holy Spirit should reveal this fact to each individual, or to the Church for

all individuals. Now, the latter course is much more simple, more general, more worthy of Providence than the former.

But let us grant that all those who read the Scripture know by a particular revelation that the Gospel is a divine book, and that it has not been corrupted by the malice and negligence of the copyists, who will give us intelligence to understand it? For reason is not enough to enable us always to grasp its true meaning. The Socinians are just as reasonable as other men, and they find in the sacred writings that the Son is not consubstantial with the Father. The Calvinists are men like the Lutherans, and they maintain that the words, "Take, eat, this is my body," signify in the passage referred to that what Jesus Christ gave to His apostles was nothing but the symbol of His body. Who will undeceive the former or the latter? Who will guide them to the knowledge of that truth which it is God's will we should all arrive at? There would become necessary at every moment and for each individual an intervention of the Holy Spirit, which the heretics refuse in the case of the whole Church assembled for the purpose of arriving at decisions. What extravagance, what blindness, what pride! They believe that they understand Scripture better than the Universal Church, which preserves the sacred storehouse of tradition, and which merits a little more than each individual that Jesus Christ, who is its head, should exert Himself in its defence against the powers of Hell.

XII. Most men believe that God is guiding them by means of a particular Providence, or rather that He is guiding them as well as those for whom they entertain feelings of great respect; they are inclined to believe that So-and-so is cherished by God to such a degree that he will not be allowed to fall into error, nor they to lead him into it; they ascribe a kind of infallibility to him, and they willingly rely upon the fictitious authority which they have made for themselves by a number of reflections upon the great and excellent qualities of the person in question, in order to avoid in this manner the troublesome task of investigation. These people are the blind following the blind, and are sure to fall into the precipice with them. All men are liable to error: *omnis homo mendax*. It is true that we need a visible authority now that we can no longer easily enter into ourselves in order to consult reason, and that there are truths necessary for our salvation which we can learn only by

revelation. But this authority upon which we must rely ought to be general, and the effect of a general Providence. God does not usually act upon our minds by means of particular volitions in order to prevent us from falling into error. That is not in accord with the ideas which we ought to have of Providence, which must bear the character of the divine attributes. God has entrusted our salvation to the care of our Mediator, but Jesus Christ imitates the procedure of His Father as much as possible by making nature subservient to Grace, and by choosing general means for the accomplishment of His task. He sent His apostles over all the world to declare the truth of the Gospel to all the nations; He gave His Church bishops, priests, and doctors, and a visible head to govern it; He established the sacraments for the diffusion of His grace into all hearts—a sure indication that He accomplishes His work by methods which are general and furnished to Him by the laws of nature. No doubt Jesus Christ can illumine our minds inwardly without the aid of preaching, but apparently He does not do so. He can regenerate us without baptism, but He does not wish to render His sacraments useless; He will never act upon any person in a particular way without some particular reason, without a kind of necessity. Yet what necessity can there be for enlightening a certain critic so that he may grasp the real meaning of a certain passage of Scripture? The authority of the Church is enough to prevent us from being led astray; why should he not submit to it? It is enough for Jesus Christ to preserve the infallibility of the Church, in order to preserve at the same time the faith of all its children who are humble and obedient to their mother. Unhappy the bold and presumptuous who expect Jesus Christ to enlighten them in a particular manner against reason, against the order of His procedure, which He has regulated in accordance with the immutable order! Jesus Christ never fails to help the good in their time of need; He never refuses them the grace which is necessary for overcoming temptation; He opens their minds when they read the holy writings; he often rewards their faith by the gift of intelligence; all this is in conformity with order, and is necessary for their instruction and the edification of the nations. But, for the maintenance of our faith in matters which have been decided, we have the authority of the Church; this is sufficient. He desires us to submit to it. From Him alone can we receive the

help that is necessary to overcome temptation. This is the reason why He intercedes incessantly in order to preserve in us our charity; but He does not intercede incessantly in order to prevent the presumptuous from falling into error when reading Scripture, having given us an infallible authority upon which we ought to rely, that, namely, of the Church of the living God, which is the pillar and firm support of truth, *columna et firmamentum veritatis!* [1]

ARISTES. What you are now saying, Theodore, is in perfect accord with the idea which you have given me of Providence. God has His general laws, and our Mediator and Head His rules, which He invariably follows, as God follows His laws, unless the immutable order which is the primordial law of all intelligences demands an exception. It is infinitely simple and more in conformity with reason that Jesus Christ should aid His Church in order to prevent it from falling into error than each individual, and above all than he who has the temerity to call in question matters which have been decided, and who thereby accuses the Saviour of having abandoned His Spouse, or of not having been able to defend her. We need at present an infallible authority. Providence has provided us with one; and this in a way which appears to me worthy of the divine attributes and of the character of our Saviour Jesus Christ, a way which answers perfectly to God's will that all men should be saved and should attain to the knowledge of truth.

THEODORE. That is true, Aristes. For the Apostolic and Roman Church is visible and recognisable. It is perpetual for all time and universal for all places; at the least it is a society which is the most exposed to the view of the whole earth and the most venerable on account of its antiquity. None of the particular sects have the stamp of truth upon them, nor any indication of divine origin. Those who at present seem to have some lustre began their course long after the Church. Of this most people are aware, even those who allow themselves to be dazzled by their little lustre which hardly extends beyond the boundaries of their own country. In this way God has provided all men, so far as His general laws permit, with an easy and sure means for arriving at a knowledge of the truth.

THEOTIMUS. I do not understand, Aristes, upon what grounds one can call in question the infallibility of the Church of Jesus

[1] 1 Tim. iii. 15.

Christ. Do not the heretics believe that it was divinely instituted, or that it is divinely governed? To doubt its divine inspiration one needs must have no idea of the Church of Jesus Christ, one must look upon it as upon other societies in order to believe that it is liable to error in the decisions at which it arrives for the instruction of its children. Yes, Aristes, there is no one, unless he be strangely prejudiced, who does not see at once that since Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, since He is its Spouse, its Protector, it is impossible for the doors of Hell to prevail against it, impossible for it to inculcate errors, provided he have that idea of Jesus Christ which he ought to have. For this there is no need to go into much investigation; it is a truth which must stare the simplest and grossest people in the face. An authority is necessary in all societies, of this everybody in convinced. Even the heretics require those of their sect to submit to the decisions of their synods. In truth, a society without any authority is a many-headed monster. Now, the Church is a society divinely instituted to lead mankind to the knowledge of truth. It is clear, therefore, that its authority must be infallible in order that we should be able to arrive at that which it is God's will we should arrive at, without being compelled to follow the perilous and inadequate path of investigation.

THEODORE. Let us even suppose, Aristes, that Jesus Christ is neither the Head nor the Spouse of the Church, that He does not watch over it, that He is not in its midst to the end of all the generations, in order to defend it against the powers of Hell; it would then no longer possess that divine infallibility which is the unshakable foundation of our faith. Nevertheless, it seems to me that one must have lost one's head, or be biased with a prodigious stubbornness, in order to prefer the opinions of the heretics to the decisions of its councils. Let us take an example. We wish to ascertain whether it is the body of Jesus Christ, or the symbol of His body, which is in the Eucharist. We all agree that the apostles knew quite well what it was. We agree that they taught that which it was the duty of all the Churches which they founded to believe. What do we do, then, in order to clear up the point in dispute? We call together the most general assemblies possible. We bring together in one place the best witnesses obtainable of the beliefs of different countries. The bishops know very well whether in the Church over which they preside it is or is not believed that the body of

Jesus Christ is in the Eucharist. They are, therefore, asked as to their opinions on the subject. They declare that it is an article of their faith that the bread is changed into the body of Jesus Christ. They pronounce anathema against those who maintain the contrary. The bishops of other Churches who were unable to be present at the assembly give positive approval to the decision; or, if they happen to have no connection with those of the Council, they are silent, and by their silence testify to their being of the same opinion! Otherwise they would not hesitate to condemn it, for the Greeks do not spare the Latins. This being so, I maintain that even on the assumption that Jesus Christ has abandoned His Church, one needs have bidden farewell to one's common sense to prefer the opinions of Calvin to that of all those witnesses who attest a fact which it is not possible they could be ignorant of.

ARISTES. This is most evident. But you will be told that these bishops who cannot be ignorant as to what is believed at present in their Churches on the question of the Eucharist may yet not know what was believed with regard to it a thousand years ago; and that it may be that all the various Churches have unconsciously fallen into error.

THEODORE. On the assumption that Jesus Christ does not govern His Church, I admit that it might happen that all the Churches, in general, should fall into error; but that they should all fall into the same error is a moral impossibility; that they should fall into it without history having left striking indications of their disputes is another moral impossibility; finally, that they should all fall into an error resembling that which the Calvinists impute to us is an absolute impossibility. For what is the decision which the Church has arrived at? That the body of a man is present at the same time in an infinity of places; that the body of a man is present in such a small portion of space as the Eucharist; that as soon as the priest has uttered certain words the bread is transformed into the body of Jesus Christ and the wine into His blood. What! I speak as a heretic—are we to believe that this madness, this extravagance has seized the minds of the Christians of all Churches? One must, it seems to me, be mad to maintain this. Never has the same error been generally approved unless it was in general conformity with the dispositions of the mind. All nations were able to adore the sun. Why? Because this star dazzles all men

generally. But if one mad people adore mice, another will adore cats. If Jesus Christ were to abandon His Church, all Christians could very well fall by degrees into the heresy of Calvin with regard to the Eucharist; for, as a matter of fact, the error is repugnant neither to our reason nor to our senses. But that all the Christian Churches should have adopted an opinion which revolts the imagination, repels the senses, astonishes our reason; all this insensibly, without anyone being aware of the fact,—to maintain this, I say again, one must have renounced one's common sense, have no knowledge of mankind, and never have given a thought to one's inner dispositions.

But I will grant, Aristes, that God having abandoned His Church, it is possible that all Christians should fall into the same error, a shocking error, and one which is quite contrary to our mental dispositions, and this without anyone having become aware of it; yet I still maintain, notwithstanding this assumption, that we cannot refuse to submit to the decision of the Church, unless we are ridiculously prejudiced. On this assumption, it is possible for the Church to be mistaken. But without any assumption one can prove quite naturally that a particular person may fall into error. It is not a question of a truth which depends upon any metaphysical principles, but of a fact as to what, for example, Jesus Christ meant by the words, "This is my body," which one can hardly ascertain in a better way than from the testimony of those who succeeded the apostles. It is alleged that the decision of the Council was contrary to what was formerly believed. Very well. It follows, therefore, that all the bishops together did not know the tradition as well as Calvin. But where are the ancient authors who say to the nations, as they ought to have done: "Take care! these words, 'This is my body,' do not mean that this is the body of Jesus Christ, but only the symbol of His body." Why do they confirm them in the thought which these clear words naturally engender in our minds, so naturally, indeed, that though nothing seems more incredible than the meaning they convey, all the Churches have believed themselves obliged to accept it? Since the same thing may in different respects be both a symbol and a reality, I admit that there are Fathers who have spoken of the Eucharist as a symbol. For, indeed, the sacrifice of the Mass symbolises or represents that of the Cross. But they ought not to have been satisfied with dwelling upon the symbol; they ought to have rejected

the reality. Nevertheless, the contrary is everywhere seen to be the case. They were afraid lest our faith be shaken through the difficulty there is in believing the reality, and they often reassure us on the authority of Jesus Christ and on the basis of the knowledge we have of the divine power.

If one confine oneself to saying that the decision of the Council is contrary to reason or good sense, I submit once again that the more it seems to clash with reason and good sense, the more certain it is that it is in conformity with truth. For, after all, were not the men of past generations made in the same way as those of to-day? Our imagination revolts when we are told that the body of Jesus Christ is at the same time in heaven and upon our altars. But, seriously, does one think that there ever has been a generation when men were not struck by so staggering a thought? Nevertheless, this awful mystery was believed by all the Christian Churches. The fact is established by the testimony of those who ought to know best; I mean by the voice of the bishops. Men must, therefore, have been instructed by a superior authority, by an authority which they believed to be infallible, and which one sees at once and without any examination to be infallible if one has that idea of Jesus Christ and His Church which one ought to have. Let people, then, assume whatever they like, one need only weigh in one's own mind what one is to believe when one has, on the one hand, the decision of a Council and, on the other hand, the dogmas of a particular individual or a particular assembly which the Church does not approve.

ARISTES. I understand, Theodore, from the reasons which you have given me, that those who deny the Church the infallibility which is essential to it are not on that account free from the obligation to submit to its decisions. To be freed from or rid of this obligation they must renounce their common sense. Nevertheless, one so often notices that the most common opinions are not the truest, that one is inclined to believe that what a good scholar puts forward is more certain than what one hears from everybody.

THEODORE. You have put your finger, Aristes, upon one of the main causes of the prejudice and obstinacy of the heretics. They do not sufficiently distinguish between the dogmas of faith and the truths which one can only discover by the work of attention. In all that depends upon abstract principles, not being within the

reach of everybody, good sense demands that we should distrust what the multitude believes. It is infinitely more likely that a single man who applies himself seriously to the search after truth will find it than a million others who do not even give it a thought. It is true, therefore, and has often been noted that the most common opinions are not the truest. But in matters of faith quite the contrary holds good. The more witnesses there are to attest a fact the more certainty does this fact possess. The dogmas of religion are not acquired by speculation, but by authority, by the testimony of those who keep the sacred storehouse of tradition. What the whole world believes, what has always been believed, that it is necessary to believe eternally. For in matters of faith, of revealed truths, of decided dogmas, the most common opinions are the true ones. Yet the desire to distinguish themselves causes people to call in question what everybody believes, and to regard as unquestionable what ordinarily passes for very uncertain. Their self-love is not satisfied when they do not excel other people, and when they know only what no one is ignorant of. Instead of building solidly upon the foundations of faith, and by humility raising themselves to an understanding of the sublime truths to which it leads ; instead of earning in this manner, both before God and all equitable people, a true and solid glory, they find a malignant pleasure and an occasion of vainglory in disturbing the sacred foundations, and are thus imprudently striking against that rock which will crush all those who have the insolence to dash themselves against it.

Aristes. I have now, Theodore, more than is necessary for interrogating my people, and for guiding them whither I have long since wished to guide them. If the Church is divinely governed, it must be divinely inspired. If Jesus Christ is its Head, it cannot become the mistress of error. God, desiring all men to attain to a knowledge of truth, cannot have left to the discussions of the human intellect the faith which leads to it. His Providence must have found a way which was certain and easy for ordinary people as well as for the learned. Particular revelations made to all those who read Scripture are not in harmony with the idea which we ought to have of the divine Providence. Experience teaches us that each person interprets it in accordance with his prejudices. Finally, even assuming that Jesus Christ does not govern His Church, one

cannot, unless one is singularly prejudiced, prefer the particular opinions of some sect or other to the decisions of a Council. All this, Theodore, seems to me evident. I am no longer afraid of anything except obstinacy in my friends, and I am only looking for some good ways of making amends to their self-respect; for I am very much afraid of not possessing the manners which are needed to free them from undertakings of all kinds to which I may find they have pledged themselves.

THEODORE. You have, Aristes, all that is needed for this purpose. Courage! You know but too well how to manage men, what provokes them, and what makes them run away. We must hope that what is likely to hinder them will be broken down by grace,—I mean those secret links which you cannot undo. While you are speaking to their ears, perhaps God in His loving kindness will touch their hearts.

FOURTEENTH DIALOGUE

The same continued—The incomprehensibility of our mysteries is a conclusive proof of their truth—Elucidation of the dogmas of faith—The incarnation of Jesus Christ—Proof of His divinity against the Socinians—All creatures, even the angels, are able to worship God through His aid alone—Faith in Jesus Christ renders us acceptable before God.

I. ARISTES. Ah, Theodore, how can I open my heart to you, how express my joy, how make you feel the happy state to which you have brought me? At present I resemble a man saved from a shipwreck, or one finding everything calm after a storm. I have often felt myself disturbed by dangerous movements, at the sight of our incomprehensible mysteries. Their profundity has frightened me, their obscurity overwhelmed me; and, though my heart has yielded to the strength of authority, it has done so not without difficulty on the part of the intellect; for, as you know, the intellect is naturally apprehensive in darkness. But now I find that everything within me is in accord, the intellect follows the heart. Indeed, the intellect leads, the intellect carries the heart with it, for, paradoxical as it may seem, the more obscure our mysteries are, the more credible they now appear to me. Yes, Theodore, I find even in the obscurity of our mysteries, received as they are by so many different nations, an invincible proof of their truth.

How, for example, can we reconcile the Unity of God with the Trinity—a society of three different persons in the perfect simplicity of the divine nature? It is incomprehensible, certainly, but it is not incredible. It is beyond us, it is true; but granted a little good sense and we shall believe it, at least if we want to be of the same religion as the apostles; for, after all, assuming that they did not know this ineffable mystery, or that they did not teach it to their successors, I maintain that it is impossible that so extraordinary an opinion should have found that universal credence which is attached to

it in the whole Church, and among so many different nations. The more monstrous—to allow an expression of the enemies of the faith—the adorable mystery appears, the more it clashes with human reason, the more it staggers the imagination, the more obscure, incomprehensible, impenetrable it is, the less credible is it that it should have insinuated itself naturally into the minds and hearts of all the Catholics of so many countries, so distant from one another. I understand, Theodore; never are the same errors universally diffused everywhere, especially not those errors which shock the imagination, which have nothing sensuous about them, and which seem to contradict the simplest and most common notions.

If Jesus Christ did not watch over His Church, the number of Unitarians would soon exceed that of the true Catholics. This I see, for there is nothing in the opinions of these heretics which is not naturally acceptable to the mind. I understand quite well that opinions which are in harmony with our intelligences may in time become established. I can even see that the most fantastic opinions may prevail with certain people possessed of a peculiar turn of the imagination. But that a truth which is so sublime, so far removed from the senses, so opposed to human reason—in a word, so contrary to the whole of nature as this great mystery of our faith—that a truth of this kind should be so universally diffused and should be triumphant among all the nations to whom the apostles have preached the Gospel, especially if we assume that these first preachers of our faith knew nothing of this mystery, is assuredly inconceivable, however little one knows of the human mind.

That there should be heretics who are opposed to a dogma so sublime I am not at all surprised at. I should be not a little surprised if no one had ever disputed it. It is far from being the case that this truth has never been attacked. That may be. People will always make a merit of attacking whatever seems to offend against reason. But that, after all, the mystery of the Trinity should have prevailed, that it should have maintained itself everywhere where the religion of Jesus Christ is accepted, without its having been known and taught by the apostles, without any authority and divine power, only a little good sense is needed, it seems to me, to recognise that nothing is more unlikely than this; for it is not even likely that so divine a dogma, so much above reason, so far removed from any that can strike the

imagination and the senses, should come naturally to the mind of anyone.

II. THEODORE. Assuredly, Aristes, your mind can be quite at peace, since you now are able to extract the light from the darkness itself, and transform into a clear proof of our mysteries the impenetrable obscurity which envelops them. Let the Socinians blaspheme against our holy religion, let them turn it to ridicule; this blasphemy and this ridicule which they think they are heaping upon it will but inspire you with respect for it. What to others is a cause of disturbance cannot but strengthen you. How can you help but enjoy a profound peace? For, after all, that which could arouse in us fear and anxiety does not consist in those plausible truths which everybody believes without difficulty, but the profundity and impenetrability of our mysteries. I understand, therefore, how it is that you are quite at peace. Enjoy this peace, my dear Aristes. But let us not, I pray you, judge of the Church of Jesus Christ as of purely human societies; it has a Head who will never permit it to become the mistress of error; its infallibility rests upon the divinity of Him who guides it. We must not conclude solely by the rules of good sense that such and such mysteries cannot be inventions of the human mind. We have a decisive authority, another way both shorter and more certain than that kind of examination. Let us humbly follow this way, so as to render honour, by our confidence and submission, to the power, vigilance, lovingkindness, and other qualities of the supreme Shepherd of our souls; for it is in a manner to blaspheme against the divinity of Jesus Christ, or against His love of His spouse, to demand absolutely other proofs of the truths necessary to our salvation than those which we derive from the authority of the Church.

If, Aristes, you believe a certain article of our faith because, on the ground of an examination instituted by you, you recognise that it is an Apostolic tradition, you honour by your faith the mission and apostleship of Jesus Christ; for your faith expresses the judgment which you arrive at that God sent Jesus Christ into the world in order to teach us the truth. But if your belief is based upon this reason alone, without regard to the infallible authority of the Church, you are not rendering honour to the wisdom and generality of the Providence which furnishes the simple and ignorant with a sure and natural means for

acquiring the truths which are necessary to salvation. You are not honouring the power, or at least the vigilance, of Jesus Christ over His Church; it would seem that you suspect Him of being willing to abandon it to the spirit of error; so that the faith of those who humbly submit to the authority of the Church does greater honour to God and to Jesus Christ than your faith, since it expresses more exactly the divine attributes and the character of our Mediator. Add to this that it is in perfect accord with the opinion which we ought to have of the weakness and limitation of our intellect; and that, if on the one hand it expresses our faith in God and in the love of Jesus Christ, it indicates clearly, on the other hand, that we have a right and salutary distrust of ourselves. Thus you see quite well that the faith of him who submits to the authority of the Church is very acceptable to God, since from whatever point of view we consider it, it expresses the judgments which God desires we should have of His own attributes, of the character of Jesus Christ, and of the limitation of the human intellect.

III. Nevertheless, remember, Aristes, that the humble and submissive faith of those who yield to authority is neither blind nor injudicious; it is based on reason. Assuredly, infallibility is contained in the idea of a divine religion, of a society which has for its Head a being subsisting in the eternal Wisdom, a society established for the salvation of the simple and ignorant. Good sense, so it seems to me, demands that we should believe the Church to be infallible. We must, therefore, submit implicitly to its authority. But this is so only because reason tells us that there is no danger in submitting to it, and that the Christian who refuses to do so belies by his refusal the opinion which he ought to have of the character of Jesus Christ.

Our faith is perfectly reasonable in its principle; it does not owe its institution to prejudice, but to right reason, for Jesus Christ has proved His mission and His character in an incontestable way; His glorious resurrection is so well attested that one must needs renounce all claim to common sense to call it in question. Nowadays truth does not make itself respected by the brilliant lustre and the majesty of miracles; for it is maintained by the authority of Jesus Christ, who is recognised as infallible, and who has promised His omnipotent assistance

and tender vigilance to the divine society of which He is the Head. Let the faith of the Church be contested by the different heresies of the particular sects; this is bound to happen in order to manifest the fidelity of the good. The vessel in which Jesus Christ reposes may perhaps be tempest-tost, but it incurs no danger. To fear the storm is to lack faith; the winds must roar and the sea swell its torrents before subsiding to a calm. Otherwise it would not be possible to make the power which one has of commanding them felt. But if the Lord permits the powers of hell to . . .

THEOTIMUS. Permit me to interrupt you, Theodore. You know that we have only the rest of this day to spend with you. We have already had only too much about the infallibility of the Church. Aristes is convinced of it. Give us, I beg of you, some principles which might guide us to an understanding of the truths which we believe, which might increase in us the profound respect which we ought to have for the Christian religion and morality, or perhaps give us some idea of the method which you would pursue in so sublime a matter.

IV. THEODORE. I have no particular method for this purpose. I judge of things only by the ideas which represent them dependently upon the facts which are known to me. That is my whole method. The principles of my knowledge are all in my ideas, and the rules of my conduct, so far as religion is concerned, in the truths of faith. My entire method resolves itself into serious attention to what enlightens me and guides me.

ARISTES. I do not know whether Theotimus understands what you are saying, but as for me, I do not understand it at all. It is too general.

THEODORE. I believe Theotimus understands me well enough. But a little more explanation is needed. I always distinguish carefully the dogmas of faith from the proofs and explanations which may be given of them. As for the dogmas, I find them in tradition and the consent of the universal Church, and I find them indicated better in the definitions of the Councils than anywhere else. I think you will agree with this: since the Church is infallible, we must abide by what it decides.

ARISTES. But do you not find them also in the Holy Scriptures?

THEODORE. I believe, Aristes, that the safest and shortest course is to search for them in the Holy Scriptures, but as explained

by tradition, I mean by the general Councils, or as generally accepted everywhere, explained by the same spirit that dictated them. I know quite well that Scripture is a divine book and the rule of our faith, but I do not separate it from tradition, because I do not doubt but that the Councils have interpreted it better than I can do. You must give a fair latitude to what I am saying. The Councils do not reject Scripture; they accept it with respect, and thereby they establish its authenticity for the faithful who might well confuse it with the apocryphal books. But, apart from this, they teach us several truths which the apostles have confided to the Church, and which have been disputed, which truths are not easily discovered in the canonical Scriptures; for how many heretics find quite the contrary in them? In a word, Aristes, I try to be quite sure about the dogmas upon which I want to meditate with a view of attaining to some understanding of them; and then I use my intellect in the same way as those who study physics. I consult with all the attention I can the idea which I have of my subject as it is presented to me by faith. I go back continually to what seems to me the most general and the most simple in order to obtain some light. When I do, I contemplate it; but I follow it only to the extent to which it attracts me irresistibly by the force of its evidence. The least obscurity causes me to fall back upon my dogma, which—in the fear I have of error—inevitably is and always will be my rule in questions which concern faith.

Those who study physics never argue against experience; but neither do they argue on the ground of experience against reason; they hesitate, not seeing the way of passing from one to the other; they hesitate, I say, not as regards the certainty of experience or the evidence of reason, but as to the way of reconciling the one with the other. The facts of religion or decided dogmas are my experiences in matters of theology. Never do I call them in question, they furnish me with rules and with guidance to intelligence. But, when believing myself to be following them, I feel myself in conflict with reason, I stop short, fully aware that the dogmas of faith and the principles of reason must, in truth, be in harmony with one another, however opposed they appear to be in my mind. I abide, then, by my submission to authority, full of respect for reason, but convinced of the weakness of my intellect and in continual distrust of myself. Finally, if enthusiasm for truth is kindled anew, I

begin my researches once more; and, by alternately attending to the ideas which enlighten me and the dogmas which sustain and guide me, I discover, without having recourse to any other peculiar method, the means of transition from faith to understanding. Yet usually, fatigued by my efforts, I leave to people who are more enlightened and capable of greater application than I am an investigation which I think myself incapable of carrying out; and the only reward which I derive from my work is that I am continually realising more and more clearly the smallness of my own mind, the profundity of our mysteries, and the great need which we all have of an authority to guide us. Well, Aristes, are you content?

ARISTES. Not over much. All that you are saying is still so general that it seems to me you are not teaching me anything whatever. Examples, if you please; reveal some truth to me, in order that I may just see how you set about finding it.

THEODORE. What truth?

ARISTES. The fundamental truth of our religion.

THEODORE. But this truth is already known to you, and I believe I have already amply demonstrated it to you.

ARISTES. It does not matter. Let us see. One cannot give too much proof of it. It is from it that we must begin.

THEOTIMUS. That is true; but will it be with that that we shall finish; for soon we must part?

ARISTES. I hope also that it will not be long before we meet again.

V. THEODORE. I cannot say, for I desire it so much that I am afraid it will not come to pass; but let us not argue about the future, let us benefit by the present. Attend to what I am going to put before you.

In order to discover by means of reason among all the religions the one which God has established, we must consider attentively the notion which we have of God or the infinitely perfect Being; for it is clear that all that is accomplished by any causes must stand in some relation to that notion. Let us, then, Aristes, consult the notion of the infinitely perfect Being, and let us mentally pass in review all that we know of the divine attributes, since it is from this source that we must obtain the light which we need in order to discover what we are in search of.

ARISTES. Well, and this having been done?

THEODORE. Gently, gently, I beg of you. God knows perfectly those attributes which I am assuming to be present to your mind. He glories in their possession. He takes an infinite pleasure in them. He can, therefore, only act in accordance with what He is, only in a way which bears the character of these same attributes. Notice this carefully; for it is the great principle which we must follow when we wish to know what God does or does not do. Men do not always act in accordance with what they are, but this is because they are ashamed of themselves. I knew a miser whom you would have taken for the most liberal man in the world. Be not, therefore, misled; men do not always express in their actions, still less in their words, the opinion which they have of themselves, because they are not what they ought to be. But it is not so in the case of God. The infinitely perfect Being cannot but act in accordance with what He is. When He acts He necessarily gives outward expression to His eternal and immutable judgment regarding His attributes, because He feels satisfaction in them and glories in their possession.

ARISTES. That is evident; but I do not see whither all these generalities tend.

VI. THEODORE. To this, Aristes, that God only gives perfect expression to His judgment regarding Himself in the incarnation of His Son, the consecration of His Pontiff, the establishment of the religion which we profess, in which alone He can find the worship and adoration which express His divine attributes and which are in harmony with His judgment of them. When God created chaos out of nothing, He said, "I am the Omnipotent." When He made the universe, He delighted in His wisdom. When He created man free, capable of good and evil, He gave utterance to a judgment of His justice and goodness. But in joining His Word to His Work, He expressed the fact that He was infinite in all His attributes, that this great universe is as nothing to Him, that everything is profane in relation to His holiness, His excellence, His sovereign majesty. In a word, He speaks as a God, He acts in accordance with what He is and in accordance with all that He is. Compare, Aristes, our religion with that of the Jews, of the Mohammedans and of all the others that you know, and judge which is that which expresses

most distinctly the judgment which God has and which we ought to have of His attributes.

ARISTES. Ah, Theodore, I understand you.

VII. THEODORE. Yes, I suppose so But note this : God is Spirit, and desires to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. True worship does not consist in external matters, in certain positions of our bodies, but in certain attitudes of our mind, in the presence of the divine majesty, that is to say, in the judgments and movements of the soul. Now, he who offers the Son to the Father, who adores God through Jesus Christ, gives utterance through his action to a judgment resembling that which God has of Himself. Out of all the judgments he gives utterance to that one most exactly expresses the divine perfections, and above all the infinite excellence and holiness which separates the divine from all besides and lifts it infinitely above all created things. Faith in Jesus Christ is, therefore, the true religion, approach to God through Jesus Christ the only true worship, the only way of putting our minds into an attitude of adoration of God, the only way, consequently, which can win for us looks of pleasure and benevolence from the author of the happiness for which we hope.

He who gives his goods to the poor, or who risks his life for the safety of his country, even he who loses his life generously in order to avoid committing an injustice, knowing well that God is sufficiently powerful to reward him for his self-sacrifice, expresses in truth by his action a judgment which honours the divine justice, and which renders it favourable towards him ; but this action, meritorious though it be, does not adore God perfectly, if he whom I am assuming to be capable of performing it refuses to believe in Jesus Christ, and claims to be able to approach God without His mediation. The opinion which this man by his refusal has of himself, namely, that he is worth something in relation to God, being directly opposed to the judgment which God gives utterance to, by the mission and consecration of His Pontiff,—this presumptuous opinion renders useless for his eternal salvation an action otherwise meritorious. For, in order fairly to merit the title to possession of an infinite good, it is not enough to give expression by means of some morally good deeds to the justice of God ; it is necessary divinely to pronounce by faith in Jesus Christ a judgment which

shall honour God in accordance with all that He is; for it is only by the merit of this faith that our good deeds receive that supernatural excellence which gives us a right to the heritage of the children of God. It is, indeed, only by the merit of this faith that we can secure the power to conquer our dominant passions and to sacrifice our life from a pure love of justice. Our actions owe their moral character to the relation in which they stand to the immutable order, and their merit to the judgments which we express by means of them of the divine power and justice. But they owe their supernatural worth and, so to speak, their infinity and divinity to Jesus Christ alone, whose incarnation, sacrifice and priesthood indicating clearly that there is no relation between the Creator and the creature, establish thereby so great a relationship that God is perfectly pleased and glorified in His work. Do you understand quite clearly, Aristes, what I can express in but an imperfect manner?

VIII. ARISTES. I think I understand. There is no relation between the infinite and the finite. This perhaps may pass for an axiom. The universe compared with God is as naught, and must count for naught; but only Christians, only those who believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ, attach no value to their own being and to this vast universe which we admire. Perhaps philosophers are of this opinion. But they do not give it utterance. On the contrary, they give the lie to this speculative opinion by their actions. They dare to approach God as though they did not know that the distance between Him and ourselves is infinite. They imagine that God is satisfied with the profane worship they offer Him. They have the insolence, or, if you like, the presumption to adore Him. Let them be silent. Their respectful silence will express better than their words do the speculative judgments which they form of what they are in relation to God. To Christians alone is it permitted to open their mouths in divine praise of the Lord. To them alone access is granted to the sovereign Majesty. For they regard themselves and the rest of the universe as nothing in relation to God, when they protest that it is only through Jesus Christ that they enter into any relation with Him. This annihilation to which their faith reduces them gives them a veritable reality before God. This judgment which they express in

harmony with God Himself attaches an infinite value to their worship. Everything is profane as compared with God, and must be consecrated by the divinity of the Son to be worthy of the holiness of the Father, to merit His kindness and benevolence. Such is the unshakable foundation of our holy religion.

IX. THEODORE. Certainly, Aristes, you understand my thought well enough. From the finite to the infinite, and, what is more, from the profound nothingness to which the Fall has reduced us, to the divine holiness, to the right hand of the Most High, the distance is infinite. By nature we are but the children of wrath—"natura filii iræ." We should be as atheists in this world without a God, without a benefactor: "sine Deo in hoc mundo."[1] But through Jesus Christ behold we are come to life again, behold us lifted up and seated in the highest heaven. "He hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up with Him and made us sit with Him in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus."[2] At present we do not feel our adoption in Jesus Christ, our worth, our divinity: "partakers of the divine nature."[3] But this is because our life is hid with Jesus Christ in God. When Jesus Christ reappears, we also shall appear with Him in glory, "we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him."[4] "Your life," says St. Paul,[5] "is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." There will no longer be between us and the divine being that infinite distance which has separated us: "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace."[6] For through Jesus Christ we all have access to the Father. "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."[7] Now, therefore [listen further to the conclusion of the apostle], "ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets; Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone. In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord. In whom ye also are builded together for

[1] Eph. ii. 3, 12. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 5, 6. [3] 2 Pet. i. 4. [4] 1 John iii. 2
[5] Col. iii. 3, 4. [6] Eph. ii. 13, 14. [7] *Ibid.* 18.

a habitation of God in the Spirit."[1] Weigh all these words, Aristes, and especially these: "in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord."

ARISTES. Only the Man-God, Theodore, can unite the creature with the Creator, sanctify the profane and construct a temple wherein God can dwell with honour. I understand now the meaning of the words: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."[2] It is a common notion that between the finite and the infinite there is no relation. Everything depends upon this indisputable principle. Any creed which ignores this principle shocks our reason and brings dishonour on the Divine Being. The eternal Wisdom cannot be its author. Only pride, ignorance, or at any rate the stupidity of the human mind can now approve of it; for the religion of Jesus Christ alone expresses the judgment which God has and which we ought to have of the limitations of the creature and the supreme Majesty of the Creator.

THEODORE. What say you then, Aristes, of the Socinians and Arians and all those false Christians who deny the divinity of Jesus Christ, and who claim nevertheless to have access to God through Him?

ARISTES. They are people who find some relation between the infinite and the finite, and who look upon themselves as of some value when compared with God.

THEOTIMUS. Not at all, Aristes, since they recognise that it is through Jesus Christ alone that they win access to God.

ARISTES. Yes, but their Jesus is nothing but pure creature. They do, therefore, find some relation between the finite and the infinite, and they utter this false judgment, this judgment so offensive to the Divine Being, when they adore God through Jesus Christ. How can the Jesus of these heretics give them access to the divine majesty—he who is himself infinitely distant from God? How can he establish a worship which shall make us give utterance to the judgments which God has of Himself and which shall express the holiness, divinity, infinity, of His essence? Every worship based upon such a Jesus assumes, Theotimus, some relation between the infinite and the finite, and lowers the divine majesty. It is a false worship, offensive to God, incapable

[1] Eph. ii. 19–22. [2] 2 Cor. v. 19.

of reconciling Him with mankind. There can be no religion but that which is based upon the only Son of the Father, upon this Man-God who joins heaven and earth, the finite and the infinite, through the incomprehensible harmony of the two natures, which makes Him at the same time like to His Father and resembling ourselves. This seems to me evident.

X. THEOTIMUS. It is clear, I admit. But what shall we say of the angels? Did they wait to glorify God until Jesus Christ was at their head?

ARISTES. Let us not abandon, Theotimus, what appears to us to be evident, whatever difficulty we may find in reconciling it with certain things which we hardly know. Reply for me, Theodore, I beg of you.

THEODORE. The angels did not wait for Jesus Christ, for Jesus Christ was before them. He is the firstborn of all creatures, *primogenitus omnis creaturae.*[1] It is not two thousand years since He was born at Bethlehem, but it is six thousand since He was sacrificed. *Agnus occisus est ab origine mundi.*[2] How is that? It is because the first of God's designs was the incarnation of His Son, because it is in Him alone that God receives the adoration of the angels, that He permitted the sacrifice of the Jews, and that He receives and will receive our praises eternally. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day and for ever."[3] Everything expresses and symbolises Jesus Christ. Everything is in its way related to Him, from the noblest of all intelligent minds to the most despised of insects. When Jesus Christ was born at Bethlehem the angels glorified the Lord. They all sang in one accord, "Glory to God in the highest."[4] They all declared that it was through Jesus Christ that heaven was full of glory. But it is to us that they declared this, to us to whom the future is not present. They have always protested to Him who is immutable in His designs and who sees His works before they are accomplished that they need a Pontiff in order to give Him divine adoration. They recognised as their head the Saviour of men even before His temporal birth. They always regarded themselves as nothing when compared with God, except perhaps those proud angels who were thrown into Hell because of their pride.

[1] Col. i. 15.
[2] Rev.. xiii. 8.
[3] Heb. xiii. 8.
[4] Luke ii. 14

ARISTES. You recall to my mind the chant of the Church when all is ready for the offering of sacrifice to God, *Per quem majestatem tuam laudant angeli, adorant dominationes, tremunt potestates*, etc. The priest raises his voice in order to lift up our souls to heaven: *sursum corda*, to teach us that it is through Jesus Christ that even the angels adore the divine majesty, and to induce us to join with them under the divine head, so as to constitute but one choir of praise and to be able to say to God: *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth! Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua.* Heaven and earth are full of the glory of God, but only through Jesus Christ, the Pontiff of the Most High. Through Him alone the creatures, however excellent they be, are able to adore God, pray to Him, and render thanks to Him for His goodness.

THEOTIMUS. It is, assuredly, in Jesus Christ that everything has its being, since without Him even heaven is not worthy of the Majesty of the Creator. The angels can in themselves have no relation, access, or communion with the Infinite Being. It is necessary that Jesus Christ should intervene, and that He should pacify heaven as well as earth—in a word, that He should reconcile all things in general with God. It is true that He is not the Saviour of angels in the same sense as He is the Saviour of men. He did not deliver them from their sins as He did us. But He did deliver them from the incapacity that naturally attaches to all creatures of having any relation with God and of rendering to God divine honour. He is, therefore, their Head just as He is ours, their Mediator, their Saviour, since it is only through Him that they subsist and that they approach the infinite Majesty of God, and that in accord with God Himself they can give utterance to the judgments which they have of His holiness. It seems to me that St. Paul had this truth in mind when he wrote those most divine words to the Colossians: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins: who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature; for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is

the head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of His Cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven."[1] How excellent these words are and how nobly they express the great idea which we ought to have of our holy religion!

XI. Aristes. It is true, Theotimus, that this passage of St. Paul, and perhaps many others, is in perfect agreement with what we have just said, but we must admit in good faith that the great motive which Scripture ascribes to God for the incarnation of His Son is His loving kindness to men: "For God so loved the world," says St. John, "that He gave His only begotten Son." There are a number of other passages which you know better than I do teaching the same truth.

Theotimus. Who doubts that the Son of God assumed human form out of goodness to mankind and to deliver them from their sins? But likewise who can doubt that He delivers us from our sins in order to consecrate us as a living temple to the glory of His Father, so that we and even the angels should through Him render divine honour to the sovereign Majesty? These two motives are not inconsistent but subordinate the one to the other. And since God loves all things in proportion as they are worthy of love, since He loves Himself infinitely more than us, it is clear that the greater of these two motives, the one to which all the others must be referred, is that His attributes should be glorified in a divine manner by all His creatures in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Since Scripture was not written for the angels, it was not necessary that we should be told over and over again that Jesus Christ came to be their Head as well as ours, and that we should form with them but one Church, but one concert of praise. A Scripture written for men, and for men who are sinners, had to speak, as it has done and incessantly, to put before us the motive which was most capable of arousing in us an ardent love for our liberator. It had to reveal to us our unworthiness and the absolute necessity of a Mediator to enable us to approach God —a necessity grounded still more upon the nothingness and

[1] Col. i. 13–20.

abomination of the Fall than upon the incapacity naturally belonging to all created things. No pure creatures can in themselves render divine honour to God, but neither can they dishonour Him as sinners do. God does not find His pleasure in them, but neither is He horror-stricken by them as He is by sin, and by him who commits sin. Scripture, then, had to speak in the way it does of the incarnation of Jesus Christ in order to make men feel their wretchedness and the compassion of God, so that the feeling of our wretchedness should keep us in humility, and the compassion of God should fill us with confidence and love.

THEODORE. You are right, Theotimus. Holy Scripture speaks to us in accordance with God's designs, which are to humble the creature and to link him to Jesus Christ, and through Jesus Christ to Himself. If God allowed all mankind to be enveloped in sin in order to show them mercy in Jesus Christ, He did so in order to humble their pride and to raise the power and dignity of His Pontiff. He willed that we should owe all that we are to our divine Head, so as to unite us with Him the more closely. He permitted the corruption of His work in order that the Father of the future world, the author of the heavenly Jerusalem, should operate upon the non-being, not of Being, but of holiness and justice, and that in Him and through Him we should become a new creature ; in order that filled with the divinity, the fulness whereof dwells in Him as in one substance, we should be able through Jesus Christ alone to render to God divine honours. What do we not owe to Him who lifts us up to the dignity of God's children, after having saved us from a state worse than that of nonentity itself, and who in order to save us from it annihilated Himself to the extent of assuming a form similar to ours, so as to be the victim of our sins ? Why, then, should the Scripture, not intended for the angels, not intended so much for philosophers as for simple people, intended only to make us love God and to link us to Jesus Christ and through Him to God, why then, I say, should the Scripture explain to us God's designs in the incarnation in relation to the angels ? Why should it not rest upon the worthlessness that attaches to all creatures, the worthlessness of the Fall being infinitely more palpable and the sight of this indignity being more capable of humbling us and of annihilating us before God ?

The angels who are in heaven have never offended against God. Nevertheless, St. Paul teaches us that Jesus Christ

pacifies that which is in heaven as well as that which is upon the earth: "And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, whether they be things in earth or in heaven";[1] that God re-establishes, sustains, or, according to the Greek version, reunites all things under the same head that which is in heaven and that which is upon earth: "*Instaurare omnia in Christo, quae in coelis, et quae in terra sunt, in ipso;*"[2] that Jesus Christ, in a word, is the Head of the whole Church, *et ipsum dedit caput supra omnem Ecclesiam.*[3] Is not this enough to make us understand that it is only through Jesus Christ that the angels themselves render divine honour to God, and that they only have communion with, access to, or relation with Him through His well-beloved Son, in whom the Father takes infinite delight, and through whom He finds perfect satisfaction in Himself? "My beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased."[4]

ARISTES. This appears to me evident. There are not two different Churches, two holy Sions. "But you are come," says St. Paul, "unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels."[5] And since God has put Jesus Christ over the whole of His Church, I believe that it is only through Him that the angels themselves fulfil their duties, and that they are on that account and always have been favourably received. Yet I have a difficulty to put before you in regard to the principle which you established a little while ago.

XII. You have told us, Theodore, that God wills to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, that is to say by means of judgments and movements of the soul; and that our worship and even our good deeds derive their moral goodness from the judgments which they express, which judgments are in conformity with the divine attributes or with the immutable order of the divine perfections. You follow me so far. But now, do you think that plain folk understand so much subtlety? Do you think that they form those judgments which adore God in spirit and in truth? Nevertheless, if the generality of men do not form the judgments of the divine attributes or perfections which they ought to form, they do not express these judgments in their actions. They

[1] Col. i. 20. [2] Eph. i. 10. [3] *Ibid.* 22.
[4] Matt. xii. 18. [5] Heb. xii. 22.

perform, therefore, no good deeds. Through their faith in Jesus Christ they worship neither in spirit nor in truth, if they do not know that to offer the Son to the Father is to declare that creatures and sinners cannot directly have any relation with God. And this it seems to me is something of which many Christians do not think. They are good Christians all the same, and I do not believe that you would dare to condemn them.

THEODORE. Note this well, Aristes. To do a good action it is not absolutely necessary to know distinctly that through that action one is expressing a judgment which honours the divine attributes or conforms to the immutable order of the perfections contained in the divine essence. But that our actions should be good they must necessarily express such judgments, and he who acts must have at least confusedly an idea of this order, and he must love it, though he know not precisely what it is. To explain this further: When a man gives alms, it is possible that he is not thinking at the time that God is just. Far from being aware of the judgment that through his alms he is rendering honour to the divine justice, and that he is rendering it favourable to himself, it may be that he is not thinking of the reward at all. It may also be the case that he is not aware that God contains within Himself the immutable order by whose beauty he is actually impressed, nor that it is the conformity of his action to this order which makes it essentially good and acceptable to Him whose invisible law is nothing but this same order. Nevertheless, it is true to say that he who gives alms expresses, through his liberality, the judgment that God is just; and that he expresses it the more distinctly the more the property of which he deprives himself through his charity will be needed by him for the satisfaction of his passions; and finally, that the more distinctly he expresses it the greater is the honour which he renders to God, the greater is the reward which he gains for himself, the greater is the merit which he acquires before God. In like manner, though he does not know precisely what the immutable order is, or that the goodness of his action consists in its conformity with this order, it is nevertheless true that it is, and can be, just only through such conformity.

Since the Fall our ideas are so confused and natural law is so annulled that we need a written law to teach us in palpable manner what we ought to do or not to do. As most men do not

enter into themselves, they do not hear the inner voice which cries out to them: *non concupisces*. It was necessary that this voice should manifest itself outwardly and enter their minds through the senses. Nevertheless, men have never succeeded in getting rid entirely of the idea of order, the general idea which is expressed in the words, " we must," " we ought," " it is just." For the least sign calls up this ineradicable idea even in children as yet attached to their mothers' breasts. Without it, men would be quite irreclaimable, or rather absolutely incapable of either good or evil. Now, provided one acts on the basis of this confused and general idea of order, and that what one does is in perfect conformity with it, it is certain that the movement of the heart is regulated by it, though the mind be not to any extent enlightened by it. It is true that it is obedience to the divine authority which produces faithful and good people. But as God issues commands only in accordance with His inviolable law, the immutable order, only in accordance with the eternal and invariable judgment which He has formed of Himself and of the perfections which He contains in His essence, it is clear that all our deeds are essentially good only in so far as they express and give utterance, so to speak, to this judgment. Let us come now to the objection of those good Christians who worship God in the simplicity of their faith.

XIII. It is evident that the incarnation of Jesus Christ gives outward expression, as it were, to the judgment which God has formed of Himself, that nothing finite can have any relation to Him. Whoever recognises the necessity of a Mediator gives utterance to his consciousness of his own unworthiness, and if he believes at the same time that this Mediator cannot be a pure creature, however excellent that creature may be supposed to be, he extols infinitely the divine majesty. His faith is, then, in itself in conformity with the judgment which God has of us and of His own divine perfections. His faith thus adores God in a perfect manner, since through judgments, which are true, and in conformity with those which God has of Himself, it places the mind in the most respectful attitude possible in the presence of His infinite majesty. But, you say, most Christians do not understand all this subtlety. They go to God quite simply. They are not even aware that they are in this respectful attitude. I quite admit that they do not all know it in the way in which

you know it. Yet nevertheless, they are in the same attitude. And God sees very well that they are, at least in the disposition of their heart. They leave it to Jesus Christ, who is their Head and spokesman, to be their representative before God in a manner that is befitting. And Jesus Christ, who looks upon them as upon His people, as upon members of His own body, as united to Him through their love and their faith, does not fail to intercede for them and to say aloud what they would not be able to express. Thus, all Christians, in the simplicity of their faith and in the preparation of their heart, ceaselessly adore all His divine attributes through Jesus Christ with an adoration which is very perfect and very acceptable to God. It is not necessary, Aristes, that we should know exactly the reasons of our faith, I mean the reasons with which metaphysics may furnish us. But it is absolutely necessary that we should profess this faith. In the same way, it is not necessary that we should know distinctly what it is that constitutes the morality of our deeds, though it is absolutely necessary that we should perform good deeds. I do not believe, however, that those who meddle with philosophy can employ their time more usefully than in trying to obtain some understanding of the truths which faith teaches us.

ARISTES. Certainly, Theodore, there is no pleasure more sensible, or at least no joy more substantial, than that which is produced in us by understanding the truths of faith.

THEOTIMUS. Yes, in those who have a great deal of love for religion and whose hearts are not corrupted. For there are people to whom light is painful. They are vexed to see what perhaps they would rather did not exist.

THEODORE. There are a few such people, Theotimus; but there are many who are afraid, and with reason, lest they should fall into some error and drag others into it. They would be very glad to have matters made clear and religion defended. But as one naturally distrusts people whom one does not know, one gets afraid, frightened, angry, and gives vent to utterances of passion always unjust and uncharitable. This causes many people to be silent who ought perhaps to speak, and from whom I should have learnt better principles than those which I have put before you. Yet often this does not compel to silence those mad and presumptuous authors who recklessly publish all that occurs to their minds. As for me, when a man adopts as his principle to submit only to evidence and authority, when I see

that he works only for the purpose of finding good proofs for accepted dogmas, I am not afraid of his being dangerously led astray. He may perhaps fall into some error. But what would you have? This is bound up with our wretched condition. It would be to banish reason from this world, if in order to be entitled to reason we insisted upon immunity from error.

ARISTES. It is necessary, Theodore, that I should confess in good faith my prepossession. Before we met, I was of opinion that reason must be banished altogether from religion, since it was only capable of causing confusion. But now I recognise that, if we abandoned it to the enemies of faith, we should soon be very hard pressed and be as discredited as the brutes. Whoever has reason on his side has mighty weapons wherewith to master all minds; for, after all, we are all rational and in essence rational. To pretend to despoil ourselves of reason as one gets rid of one's official clothes is to make ourselves ridiculous and to vainly attempt the impossible. Thus, at the time when I decided that we ought not to use reason in matters of theology, I felt quite sure that I was demanding from the theologians something they would never grant. I see now, Theodore, that I had gone to a dangerous extreme, which did not exactly redound to the honour of our holy religion, founded by the supreme Reason, which has adapted itself to our level in order to make us more rational. It is much better to abide by the course which you have adopted, of basing dogmas upon the authority of the Church, and of looking for proofs of these dogmas in the simplest and clearest principles with which reason provides us. Metaphysics must thus be made to serve religion (for of all the branches of philosophy there is almost no other which can be of use to it), and to throw upon the truths of faith that light which helps to reassure the intellect and fully to reconcile it with the heart. In this way we shall preserve our character of rationality, notwithstanding our obedience and submission to the authority of the Church.

THEODORE. Remain firm in this thought, Aristes; always in submission to the authority of the Church, always ready to yield to reason. But do not take the opinions of certain doctors and of certain communities, or even of an entire nation, for unquestionable truths. Neither condemn them too lightly. So far as the opinions of philosophers are concerned, never submit to them entirely unless you are obliged and compelled to do so by the

weight of evidence. I give you this advice in order to cure the evil which I may have caused; and in order that, if I have had the misfortune to submit to you, as true opinions, some that are uncertain, you may be able to discover their falsity by following this good advice—advice which is so necessary and which I am very much afraid I have often neglected.

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